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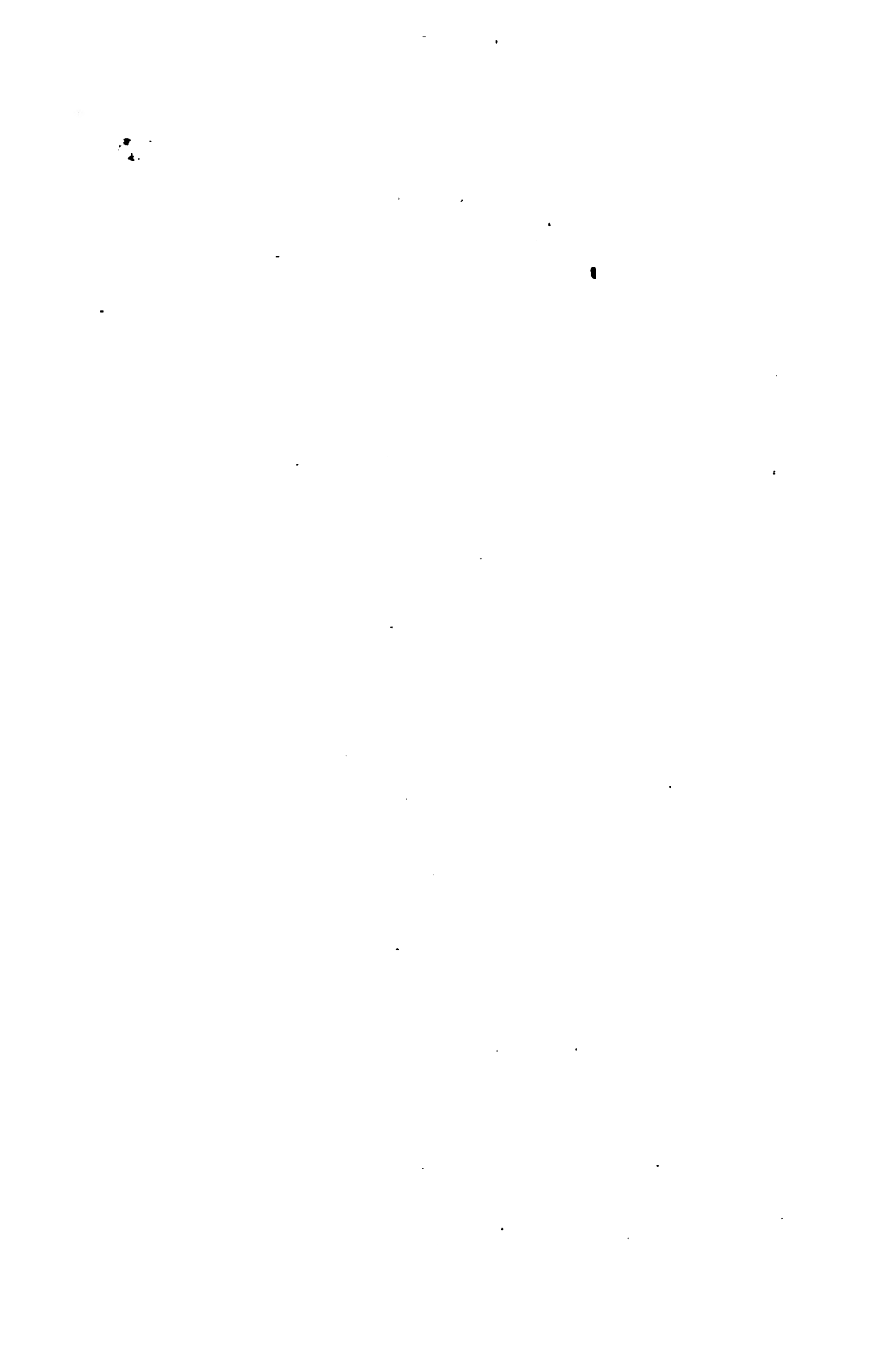


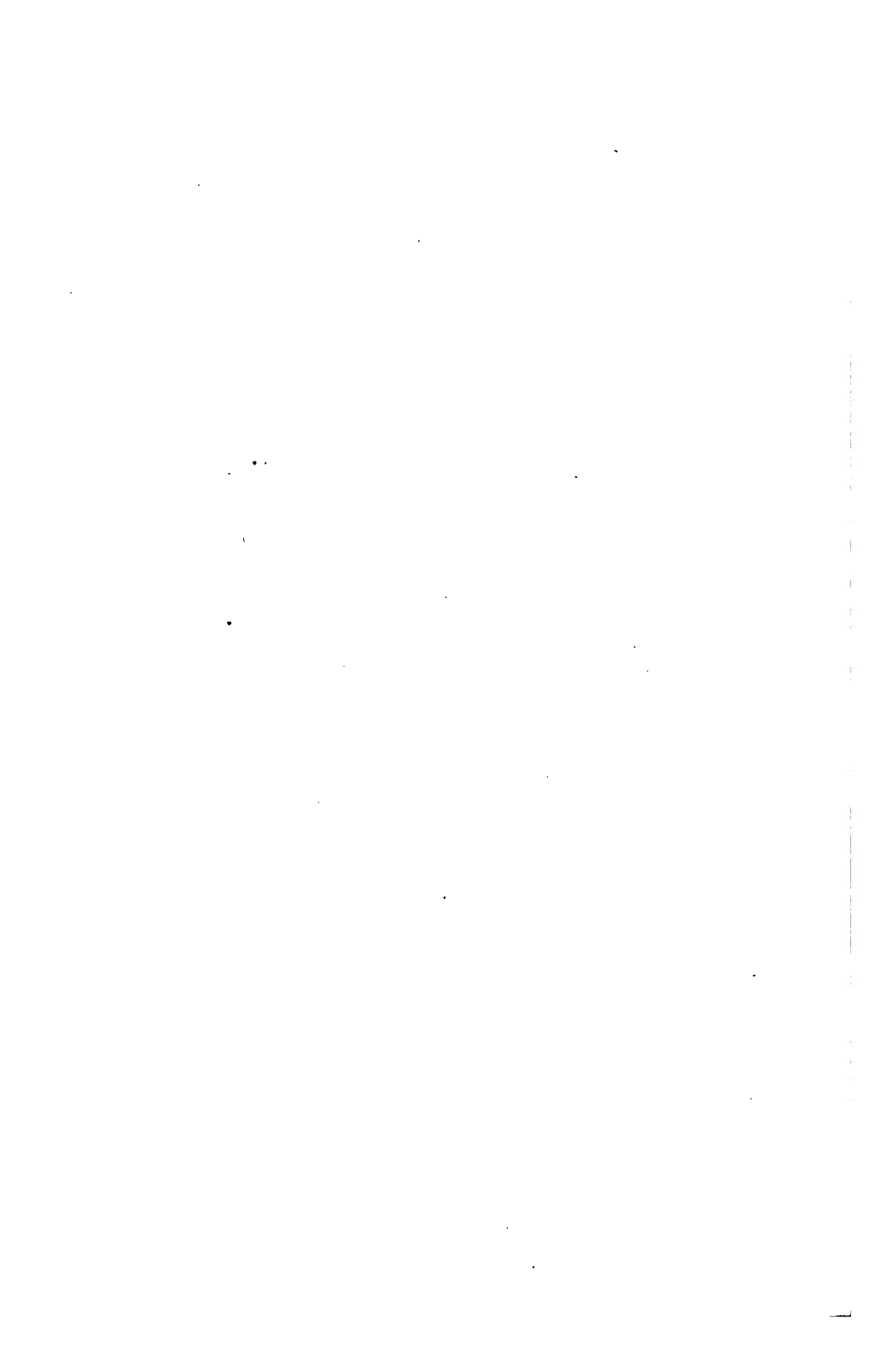
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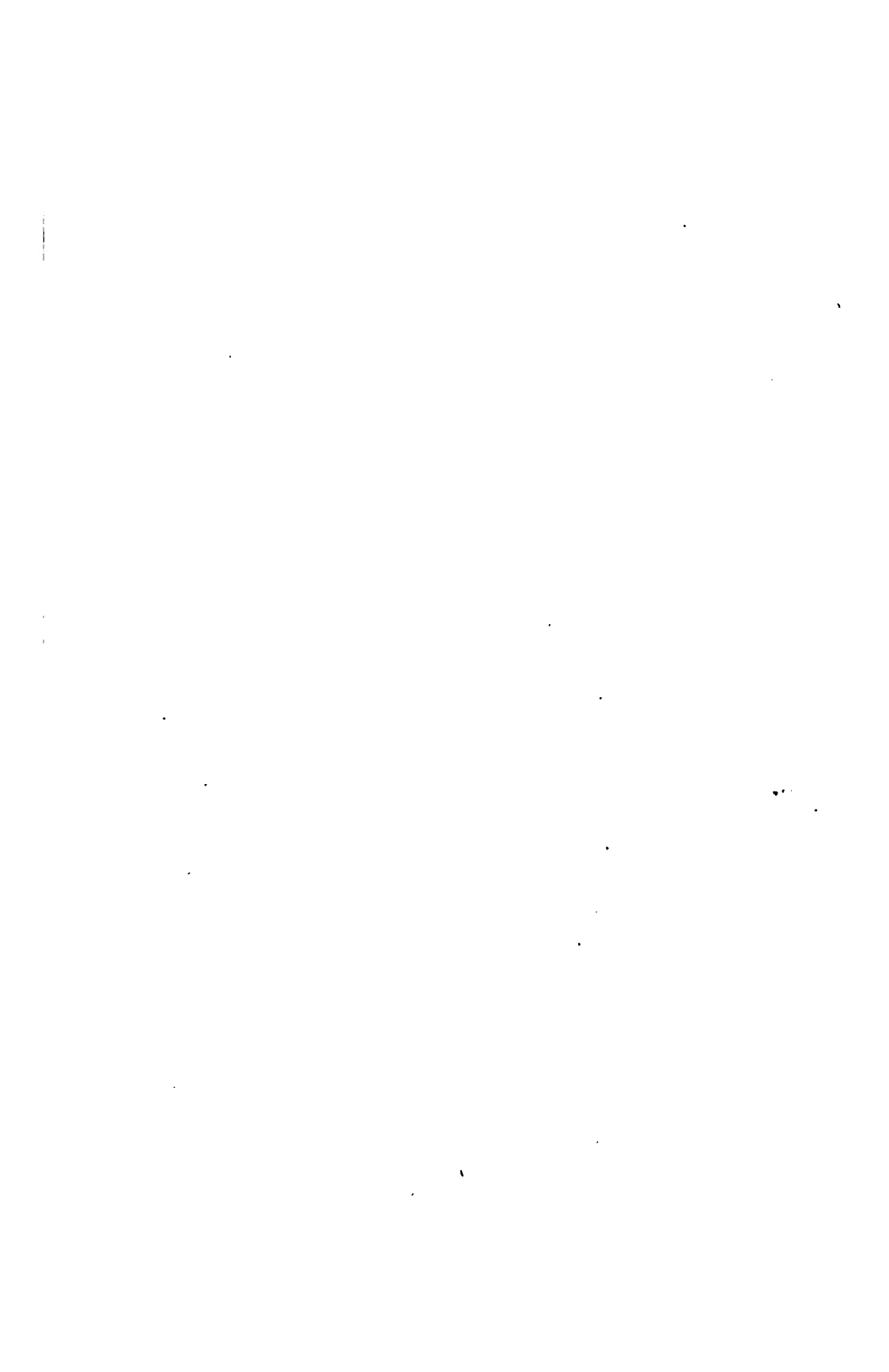






# **THE MAKING OF CARLYLE**







*Thomas Carlyle.*

# THE MAKING OF CARLYLE

AN EXPERIMENT IN BIOGRAPHICAL  
EXPLICATION

BY

R. S. CRAIG

"—now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face."

LONDON  
EVELEIGH NASH  
FAWSIDE HOUSE

1900



1847



# THE MAKING OF CARLYLE

AN EXPERIMENT IN BIOGRAPHICAL  
EXPLICATION

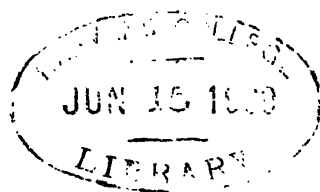
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"For now we see through a glass darkly : but then face to face."

LONDON  
EVELEIGH NASH  
FAWSIDE HOUSE  
1908

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# THE MAKING OF CARLYLE



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY—BIRTH AND PARENTAGE (BORN 4TH DECEMBER 1795)

"Rustic Annandale begins it, with its homely honesties, rough vernacularities, safe, innocently kind, ruggedly mother-like, cheery, wholesome, like its airy hills and clear rushing streams."—*Reminiscences*, "Edward Irving."

ECCLEFECHAN is a straggling little grey-stone village built alongside the main highway between England and the West of Scotland, in the pleasant, well-wooded valley of the Annan, in the county of Dumfries, Scotland. A century ago, ere yet our manufacturing era had diminished its importance and the value attaching to its situation, it occupied a place somewhat higher perhaps than that accorded to it in the geography of to-day. It is an ancient village in a rich agricultural district, and its name was conferred upon it by those who presumably were its founders, the ancient inhabitants of Strathclyde, the Britons of Galloway, who occupied all the region hereabouts and as far north as Dumbarton when the

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Romans came. The village site must have been well chosen, for the Roman invaders selected theirs at Middlebie, in its vicinity, leaving indeed remains and indications of a settlement of some importance, duration and extent there. In the day of the unearthing of these by the local antiquaries who had discovered them, the boy Carlyle helped to translate some of the Latin inscriptions, his earliest appearance in the world as a teacher and expounder, and his first vivid introduction to History, regarding which he was yet to make notable discoveries of his own.

The connection subsisting between every great man and the birthplace of his race and family lies hidden beyond human speculation, but it is at all events intimate, vital, and momentous. So much of the "making" of any one is concealed in the mysteries of Time and Space that we must infer the fashioning to have been carried on with peculiar relationship to situation and environment during the long dark ages. Ecclefechan has a history distinct and apart from that of Carlyle, but it is the history of Carlyle which leads the world to think of that of Ecclefechan, and is our business at the present moment.

During the early troubled years of Scottish history, and for some centuries after the Scottish nation had emerged distinct in government and aspiration from its racial kin of England, Ecclefechan with Annandale in which it nestles formed the boundary, as it were, or most outlying portion of the wild, stormy and chivalrous Borderland of Scotland, with its rieviers or cattle-lifting heroes, its struggles for mastery by the strong arm alone, its grapples

hand to hand with anarchy, and, above all, with its traditions as the "Debateable Land," or region of questionable loyalty to central powers whether of Scotland or England. Raiders had roamed the countryside unchecked for centuries, unchallenged save by other raiders of like breed. England had laid it waste time and again. There, in short, the old lawless conditions lingered longest. It was the last to enjoy the advantages of peace, settled government and civilisation which the Union at length secured. It has nourished in consequence at all times a race of peculiar temper and independence, self-centred, silent and far-seeing, rather than amiable, cultured or refined.

Ecclefechan is a village remote from central and metropolitan influences, and in pre-railway days, when men and women lived and died whose eyes had never rested beyond the valleys of their nativity, each valley or district in the Borderland tended to produce its characteristic type called into being by the local conditions. Along with Annandale, Ecclefechan took its share in the making of the history of Scotland and the development of the national character, but the one event of world-wide importance of which we have record in all its long history occurred there late in the eighteenth century, when the old conditions which had subsisted for so many centuries were passing away for ever.

Like all really great events, it came unheralded ✓ and unannounced. Like many incidents of vast importance to every one in the ultimate, it occurred among the lower or humbler ranks of men and women, almost but not quite among the humblest.

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When James Carlyle, master-mason in the village of Ecclefechan, then in his thirty-seventh year, took to himself a second wife, called Margaret Aitken, to house-keep for him and set up again his desolate home, lying vacant of wife and mother these two years past, what British statesman so wise and far-seeing as to have detected in that social ceremony of humble life in the secluded Parish Kirk of Hoddam the most fateful and notable event not only of the year 1795 (in the March of which it was celebrated) but in all that district of Annandale during all the centuries? Who could have descried in such an occurrence one of those epoch-marking events which "on Time's outstretched forefinger sparkle for ever"?

Yet so it was to be. For one of the first results and the consequence of that marriage which was to prove epoch-marking was the birth on the 4th of December 1795 of the first child born to James Carlyle and Margaret Aitken, a boy who was named Thomas in accordance with Scots family tradition after his paternal grandfather. He was duly baptized as such, and grew up to greatness.

✓ James Carlyle was a widower with one son, a boy about two years of age at the time of the second marriage. The maiden he chose was sedate and religious, of formed mind and character far beyond what is usual at the age of twenty-four in any rank of society. Her father belonged to the same social status as her husband, a weaver apparently in the little community, and a fellow-member of the same religious sect. A native of Kirkmahoe, in the same county of Dumfries, whose father had settled in

Ecclefechan, Margaret Aitken was acting most probably as his housekeeper when the dour but well-to-do mason came to woo her with his advantageous proposal. Her illustrious son describes her as a woman "to me of the fairest descent, that of the pious, the just, and the wise; to us best of all mothers, to whom for body and soul I owe endless gratitude." No thoughtful reader of that son's biography but must arrive at a like conclusion after all deductions have been made for the filial piety so intense in Carlyle, and must eventually perceive that, in his mother as in his father also, Thomas Carlyle was fortunate as few men have ever been, no matter into what grade of society they chance to have been born. To them he owed not only his physical existence but that greatest of all his vast endowments, his moral character. No other blessing of Providence can for one moment be compared with this, though it requires the thought and life of a Carlyle to press it on the world's attention. Carlyle's parents were the necessary precursors of himself, as indeed good parentage is perhaps the essential pre-requisite for every great and good man, without which such is almost inconceivable.

One of the most marked of Carlyle's characteristics, if not absolutely the most distinguishing trait in him, as it was of his parents before him, a family inheritance, is manifest in a peculiar gratitude all felt that they should belong to the family they did, an intense clan pride, an innate but not always warranted notion of superiority to other families. In its origin it may have been a tradition passed

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down from old Border chiefs, but however originated a peculiar kinship, created by this mutual feeling of superiority to neighbours and surrounding circumstances generally, knit firmly together the family circle of James Carlyle. It is easy now to see that in Margaret Aitken the mother a spiritual force had entered which invested the father's harsher and more worldly pride, common enough in most families, with the moral significance which her children devoutly noted and honoured as the real distinction of their own. It is rare to find a family so impressed by moral worth and contemptuous of opposing worldly splendour.

The immediate source of inspiration was in the mother, and perhaps this fact explains the strict limits within which this helpful clan sympathy was manifested. Carlyle has an invincible bias towards his own family, and especially towards his parents, but it is entirely limited to these. One trifling but significant illustration of the strict limitations of his family affections and the Carlyle clan spirit fronts us in the very beginnings of that family's existence, to use the term in the exclusive sense of blood relationship which alone Carlyle recognised. Whether or not James Carlyle's first-born son and heir (John by name) had already been taken away from his father's house, since no one was now left there to attend to his infant wants, he was at any rate not brought back, or brought up by his stepmother. The child seems to have remained and others to have desired him to remain with his maternal grandfather. James Carlyle's whole life shows that he was a careful and affectionate father with a lively sense of responsibility,



but this little John, his eldest son, was to have no lot or share in that wonderful family of Carlyles with which the world concerns itself, the family of his own father. The reader of that history can hardly fail to observe at the outset that John the first-born is excluded almost deliberately from the commencement outside the intensely loving and most united household of Margaret Aitken his stepmother.

To her illustrious son Margaret Aitken or Carlyle was all he so piously and proudly declares, but his strong family bias blinds him to a certain narrowness and concentration of her affection which is obvious enough to the outsider. She was scrupulously just rather than loving and merciful, observant rigorously of her maternal duties, but not kind and loving enough to extend these beyond the instincts of her mother's heart, outside that domain in which the call of blood is paramount. A certain hardness in her character, which intensified her love of her own, escaped the filial eyes of her son. She was a typical mother rather than a broadly sympathetic woman, and as such capable of injustice to other people's children where these brought the remotest peril to her flock.

But outside the exclusive family circle though he be, this elder John serves one very useful purpose. Through him, brought round to see his father and play with his little two-year-old stepbrother Thomas, we obtain our first glimpse of the latter. He is all in tears and in furious temper, provoked as one notes amusingly by the presence of this sturdier and older stranger. The angry Thomas is not inclined to passive wailing merely, but has flung his diminutive

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stool, the tripod of the tearful Teufelsdröckh, at the intruding half-brother. Whereat the stern father, displeased doubtless by the ominous disagreement, comforts him. The mother's attitude is not mentioned, but seems tolerably clear nevertheless. One has a sigh for the motherless child received so menacingly by the weeping and hot-tempered supplanter, just as one feels it is a discordance to read in that noble Reminiscence of "James Carlyle" the harsh repetition of what must have been Margaret Carlyle's hints to her beloved son, but are nevertheless uncalled for or twisted by womanly jealousies. Carlyle is writing about his father's first wife. "Many ways I have understood," he says, while never a thought of possible bias enters his filial head, "he (his father) had much to suffer then, yet he never spoke of it." Who did?

But Carlyle can be noble too in his thoughts about Janet Carlyle, his mother's predecessor, for it is the son of Margaret Carlyle who gives us also that intimate and sacred glimpse of her—a mere passing reflection of his mind yet calling up so vividly the actual scene, "She was delirious and would let none but my father cut her fair woman's hair off." The dead wife must have loved that strong grim husband of hers. The dour Seceder must have been capable of inspiring love in good women.

John the first-born becomes a "householder of Cockermouth," justly treated always and never deprived of the least of his legal and natural rights either by his stepmother or her family. But he grew up to his own great loss outside the fortunate circle, and consequently is of no interest to us now.

His fate as a dweller outside his father's home may have been of his own choice or urged by maternal relatives. It may have had a hundred arguments in its favour at the time, the result is the same. All this is curious merely as the earliest and a very significant instance of the exclusiveness and intensity of the Carlyle family spirit, which is so pronounced a feature of the greatest representative the family ever possessed. No one can understand Carlyle who has not grasped the reality of this strong bias of his and the extraordinary limitation of his affections.

Nine children in all were born to James and Margaret Carlyle, of whom the second was a son also, and was baptized Alexander ; the third was a girl, who only survived two years, but whose white little form, stiff in death, for long haunted the imagination of her brother Thomas, admitted to the spectacle through the sheer callousness of some relative or another ; the fourth was the better known John Aitken Carlyle, whose Christian name we have seen already appropriated by the stepbrother, still further emphasising the latter's aloofness from his father's house ; the fifth was a girl, Margaret, who survived till 1830 (the Craigenputtock period of her famous brother) ; the sixth was James, the stay-at-home, who appeared the real great man of the family to the rustic eyes of Ecclefechan ; while three sisters, Mary, Jean, and Janet, junior to him, completed the tale.

Of all these the two brothers, Alexander and John, the immediate successors of Thomas, were the members of the family who came most completely under the eldest's powerful guiding hand and whole-

some stimulating influence. John especially owed almost everything to which he attained to his generous elder, whose encouragement of the younger brethren was never-failing even in the crisis of his own difficulties. Both of them nobly repaid his interest in their welfare. In later years John also rose to a distinction of his own in the literature of his country, though vastly inferior to that of his great brother. He is the translator in literal and expressive prose of Dante's *Inferno*. Although he was known in his lifetime as contributor to magazines, he practised his profession of physician for the greater portion of his existence, and refrained on his brother's wise advice from entering the world of letters himself had done. Next to his mother, John was the member of Carlyle's family most in sympathy with him, but unlike her, perhaps, he exercised little influence in return. Carlyle acknowledged few influences in his life, with what truth we shall observe as we go on.

All shared in this powerful, intense, and helpful clan feeling. All furthered the family ambition, and from the first recognised the sure hope of it in the character and talents of the eldest son. Every member of the family took his share and did his or her part in his aid. Each assisted the other with full faith in their destiny. Among the Carlyles if anywhere the truth of the maxim that union is strength received fullest verification. Had it not been so, they could never have accomplished what they did. The clan was contemptuous of others and the opinion of others, it was unsocial and not likely to be popular among the villagers or elsewhere; yet its pride was to prove beneficial on the whole, controlled as it was

by the sober sense of its wisest and strongest member. Perhaps, however, the world has resented the fact more than might be supposed. The hideous controversy which has disfigured a great man's memory would scarce have been so bitter, or found such abundant fuel, had the family pride and Carlyle's scorn of other people not been so marked as they were.

During a long life Carlyle remained in closest touch with his family, and with the anxious pious mother most sacredly and intimately of all. He hastened to her side after every literary undertaking to renew his physical and mental strength and to recruit exhausted energies. She gave him sympathy in abundance and spiritual assurance beyond sympathy. Carlyle squared his creed religiously and rigidly with hers when he came to form his own, for he recognised the essential truth of that in her life. By their fruits shall creeds be known.

In the years gone by which were then to come mother and son sat together by the ingle-neuk of the low-ceilinged kitchen in that Ecclefechan house of theirs, with the stern religious father who spoke out when he did speak so that all obeyed, in autocratic free-spoken fashion of his own, or surrounded by the little family, increasing every year or so in those childhood days, the brothers and sisters who were taught to look so proudly and confidently on this elder brother in whom the parents had such faith. It was Carlyle's home. His wife when she came on the scene in later years was simply adopted by the little circle of Carlyles and was admitted one of them. Half rebelliously she had to submit to that mode of

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arranging life, to choke down her own sense of superiority as their "social better," and to make the most of it, in Scriptural literal fashion making "his people her people." He gave her fullest warning, but doubtless she felt she could take care of herself! Carlyle's dominant love, however, remained constant to his mother. It was a passion for her simple truth and sincerity, for the spiritual consolation and insight he found nowhere else, perhaps least of all, did he confess it, in the talented woman he married. His wife came second to his mother, as who can wonder when they reflect on the nature of the tie which bound these two as one. That little fact alone is perhaps at the bottom of half her complaints. The matter was deep, vital, and, against such an intensity of affection, irremediable. She knew it and in her secret heart, as alas! in correspondence also, she resented it. The clan spirit has more to answer for than the world admits as yet, but it accomplished much.

At the time of his second marriage James Carlyle was living in the square, well-built stone house, with slated roof and the big archway passing through the centre of it, which still stands in the main street of Ecclefechan. We have his great son's testimony that the houses the father built "stand firm and sound to the heart all over his little hill district," as the honest work of a true man must always do. Carlyle's early home testifies to the truth of his words to-day. The house had been erected by the father's own hands, assisted by those of his brothers, his informal partners in the mason business, as their private residence and office. "Arch House" was the local

name of it, and the arch divided the house accommodation into two tenements, of which the upper portion, to the right of it, was that inhabited by James Carlyle. Carlyle himself tells us that he was born "in the room inconceivably small," the little recess whose tiny window may be seen above the arch to the right. Through that arch went the mason's carts to the yard behind, and the room wherein Carlyle was born is above it, at the head of a narrow stair to the left of the ascending visitor. A larger but still diminutive room according to modern ideas, to the right hand and facing the back, completes the upstairs accommodation of the house. Below are parallel quarters of like dimensions, used probably as kitchen and best room. The house has long been set apart and dedicated to the memory of him who first saw the light within its walls.

The room in which Carlyle was born is truly of the dimensions of a closet, but his own notions of dimensions had enlarged greatly when he wrote these words. It is comfort and prosperity indeed compared with the clay biggin' of Burns which so nearly tumbled about the ears of mother and infant that night the "waly boy" who has become the darling of his nation was ushered into his stormy existence. In it there was little space for more than the old-fashioned bed which nearly filled it, yet it possesses its own narrow window admitting light and air at least. It is, after all, a cheery and possibly sunny closet with which his mother was well content, nay perhaps proud of, looking out on the wide village street, the opposite inn and the sprawling burn, whose banks from of old were strewn with fragments of earthen-

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ware and broken china, house refuse cast there after the immemorial fashion of rusticity. A little stream flows close by the front of the house which in these days was utilised as the sewer a generous Providence had provided. Times have changed, and we now forbid humble cottars the use of burns, while allowing towns and every manufacturer of poisonous liquids to desecrate our noble rivers. For we are more democratic than our fathers were.

By that house door and by that burnside in the years we speak of sat the youthful Teufelsdröckh eating from his porringer, or, perched high up on the containing wall behind, gazing with the clearest and most observant eyes surely ever child possessed at the village life around him, admiring too, as later he remembered, the golden tragic sunsets in the west and the fair realms of cloud and sky which were already dumbly calling to his soul. "He had an eye for the gilding," he says; while the road stretching from his feet away into the distance—did it not also, like other roads, lead one at length to Rome? The world without was calling him, and he was listening with all his powers.

James Carlyle, his father, had finally established himself in Ecclefechan after a wretched, wandering, "hugger-mugger," and most unhopeful existence as the little poaching brat of a small crofter, then as odd man and occasional farm out-worker. A hard and little-cared-for childhood had been his, without more than the barest rudiments of education, yet not without religion, and still less without the grace of God. After long and severe self-discipline, he had forced himself into habits of industry, and



having seized a favourable moment to train himself as a labouring mason, he had been led by trade requirements to the village, there to set up for himself that home and place in the world which his birth had almost denied him. Brown Knowe had been his birthplace, a hill croft at no very great distance from Ecclefechan, but reckoned as another world in simpler days. He carried with him the sternest memories of his own upbringing, of his poor over-driven mother and of her efforts to procure the children's food. Let it never be forgotten that the man who was to be a glorious example for ever of a parent's love and self-sacrifice, who was so generously to allow to others what had been denied himself, had never experienced the blessings of a home or father's care, and had had to fight or scramble for the barest livelihood since he could walk. Almost he had been an Ishmael. "I feel to my father," his famous son was to acknowledge, "so great though so neglected, so generous also towards me—a strange tenderness peculiar to the case, infinitely soft and near my heart. Was he not a sacrifice to me?" "I can see my dear father's life in some measure as the sunk pillar on which mine was to be built. Had I stood in his place, could he not have stood in mine and more?" It is a fair question and a candid. When the elder Carlyle "found religion" and put it to such noble uses a true man was added to the fold, which does not always happen.

James Carlyle's father, Thomas Carlyle the elder, was the last of the old Border stock of Carlyles, good riders, fond of the open air, strong ready men in heart and hand, but unskilled in the new peaceful and

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orderly ways, nay worse, unsympathetic to them and unable to earn a livelihood in that fashion, departing veterans of a bygone day. The grandfather was contemptuous of the gentler virtues and particularly of industry, in much the same way as Greeks despised the trader in their heroic age of human slavery. He scorned the meaner, more practical virtues which advancing civilisation and new conditions were everywhere bringing into play along that Border line which was naturally the last to feel them. His illustrious grandson perhaps shared these notions more than he suspected, but his father and he had all the capacity to earn a livelihood easily, and the patient habits of industry which the elder had not, while the grandson in addition possessed genius, and above all a determination and pride which supported as it was by the most inflexibly applied morality, forbade all possibility of starvation or set-back in the race of life. All alike scorned mere wealth as an end in itself.

The grandfather could remember the "Forty Five," the futile but chivalrous attempt of Prince Charlie to wrest the throne and kingdom of his ancestors from Destiny. His old eyes had seen the Highlanders. He linked Carlyle to the past of his country by his recollections, for he had the shrewd observance of his race. He was the last of the old Border type. In his son James had been aroused all that modern passion "to get on," to master untoward circumstances rather than passively despise them, which the old man lacked. No sooner had James "found himself" and religion at the same time than he discovered also the keenest desire and the firmest determination to learn the ways of order even if they

were the scorned ways of trade and labour, to acquit himself a man in modern fashion, to survive and become a strength, the characteristic which distinguishes the first attempt every family must make in striving to declare itself and to assimilate new conditions. All along the Border line, equally as among the Carlyles, the same adjustment was going on. Communities were declaring themselves, and the first foundations of the leading families in them of to-day were being laid. Our present-day social order was rising.

In his ardent and passionate assertion of the absolute necessity for the Hero, Carlyle, especially when writing the memoirs of his own forebears, is inclined always to accord scant consideration to *general* national movements and tendencies, which carry the Hero to place and power as inevitably and as surely as his own "dæmon" or genius does. The one is not possible without the other. That either can "produce" the other is manifestly absurd. Carlyle was disposed at all times to regard himself, and especially his parents, as people and influences apart from their neighbours, superior to these and alone capable of the highest.

The elder Carlyle was industrious, frugal, skilful, honest in his trade and attentive to it. He was bound to succeed. He was a proud man by nature, and success fostered the pride, as it always does. Early in life he had been converted to the hard and logical, gloomy but strength-giving Calvinist creed of the day and, what was more, sincerely and above all believed in it. It was the creed, the hypocrisy of which Burns was even then scarifying in "Holy

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Willie's Prayer," and the beauty of which he worshipped in "The Cottar's Saturday Night," the creed of men like Burns's father, and in some degree that of Scott who had revolted from the orthodox expression of it, the creed which made the stern, strait-laced, exclusive Scot upright if gloomily punctilious, attentive to little beyond his own soul and his material aggrandisement, but effective there beyond all other creeds; the stern creed, with its sublime insistence on Responsibility, which nourished the hardy souls of our pioneers of Empire in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the world over, the religious belief of the men who made Scotland and helped to make the Empire what they are, without whom these had never stood in their strength to-day.

The creed carried the defects of its qualities. A man who has entered into a hard, ungracious bargain with his Maker is not unlikely to be the hard driver of a bargain with his fellow-men. His God after all, he might consider, had not been too generous to him. It had been a bargain, not an act of Grace. God had sent man into the world to labour by the sweat of his brow, and the injunction nerved the Scot to spare others rather less than he spared himself, which was little. Not happiness but misery was the proper lot of all, sufferings and hardships innumerable were to be endured, and if the Heaven held out at length was of the most exclusive and dubious description, nevertheless it was all there was, and the Scot by his dreary bargain was entitled to it. Justice was caricatured in a vain effort to reconcile an actual existence of toil and oppression with All-powerful Beneficence. God was a taskmaster and nothing

else. The doctrine of love had fallen out of Scots cognizance in the bitter and shameless oppression the poor had endured for centuries. Church and State had preyed on them. Far from exciting our scorn and laughter, the creed should earn our undying love and pity, for it bears witness to poor over-driven men and women picturing God in the image of all the injustice and denial of Himself their human eyes beheld in the life around them.

Knox was no more the creator of the Scots creed and spirit than the fly on the axle. It is a farce, for which Carlyle is as responsible as any, to credit Knox or any other human being with national and inbred characteristics. Never yet did Hero create anything. To credit Knox with doing so is Hero-worship run mad.

It was a bargain with Deity, a wrestling of Jacob in the Scriptural manner. There was curiously hardly a whisper of Christianity in the creed. It was Hebrew to the core.

Carlyle believed the creed as a child and, modified and interpreted by his own great moral personality and mental scepticism, he believed it to the end. The creed of Carlyle is this same Scots theistic creed stripped of the unbelievable. What was this unbelievable as Carlyle saw it and declared it? Merely that as the Kirk of Scotland in his day believed and defined the creed it was a local religion, adapted to Jewish intelligences and suited to Jewish conditions, a dead letter because avowedly a Hebrew revelation vouchsafed the Jews alone and only by monstrous logic twisted to suit ourselves. Christianity, for example, had been ignored by the creed, though

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Christianity had changed the world and all the conditions of the world since its appearance.

It was the grand discovery of Carlyle that the creed properly interpreted, in its spirit and essence was true, not however as the Kirk supposed as some logical deduction from the Bible, but as a revelation of God working in Scottish history and all history, living to-day as surely as when Jacob wrestled with the Angel of God and the Commandments were thundered forth from Sinai. This creed, God Himself, was proved by the laws of retribution in human history which declared His presence, the laws which even Gibbon detected and bore unwilling witness to, by the Cromwells and Napoleons born to set a bewildered world to rights and quell anarchies, or by the French Revolution itself sent to rid the world of intolerable tyranny. The creed was eternally true. Carlyle gave up the Kirk, but he held to God. He had found Him.

In his creed, as his race had done before him in theirs, Carlyle still represented just his own experience, which unfortunately he could not but misinterpret as a hard one while it was really God-favoured and great. He saw no guiding Hand, which was nevertheless<sup>†</sup> to lead him so kindly and so far to such a height. He saw but the hard task and the bitter uncertainty. The end was still far out of sight and his hopes were perhaps at the lowest when he formulated his creed, and he framed it for a fight in which no favours were to be granted. But God asks acknowledgment of favours from none, and there never was any mistake about the reality of Carlyle's worship or of its sincerity. At the end the bitterness his wife bequeathed pro-

voked Carlyle to greater and greater misconception of a "bad, bitter world" which yet had used him so kindly! So in Carlyle the sadness inseparable from such a creed is intensified by his own pride and haughtiness and sense of merit, while the Heaven he offers has neither substance nor reality. He knew of none. But he did know the hell. No great man ever lived but knew the reality of that.

All that such a creed as Carlyle's can offer for this world is a patient sad Stoicism, which is a poor substitute for the peace of God which passeth understanding. Perhaps that dawned on his last years, but as a promise.

Carlyle did the rough hero work on which others can build a gentler creed of their own, but his will always lie firm and true at the foundation of theirs. For himself and the world for ever he had made his great discovery. He had gained the one thing needful, he had produced an ordered world out of the chaos which threatened to end in atheism. It was work for a Hero. So far as himself was concerned, it was with a gladness beyond expression that he found he had not travelled outside his mother's creed, but that his creed was hers restated in his own fashion and interpreted by speculative intellect. And indeed had he not been led affectionately astray by his family clannishness his insight could not have failed to discern that her creed was nothing else than his race's dumb striving to express an unutterably stern life in religious terms. He could not have escaped it even if he would except as Hume had done by boldly denying himself or spirit altogether! And Kant had revealed the innate absurdity of that.

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were a successful, rising folk, fully alive to the necessity and the rewards of toil. The parents taught continuously both by precept and example that this world and the next are the inheritance of the workers, the doers, not the spectators and talkers. That is notoriously the Scots creed in its most practical aspect. Later Carlyle was to proclaim the old truth in trumpet tones which the world accepted as a new evangel.

Early in their married life, probably as soon as the wonder-child who had been born to them revealed his restless and inquiring spirit, the Carlyle parents made it a supreme and sacred ambition that the fullest career within their power and means should be open to him at least. They seem to have read each child's character and tendency very acutely, but the great matter was the noble wish itself. The lofty resolution first reached for the sake of the eldest born was right nobly aided and extended by him as he grew older so as to embrace all who chose to take advantage of it or whose capacities abetted it. Neither of the parents, as we have said, had received anything but the rudest of upbringings, and education had been denied. The father had advanced but little farther than his wife, drawn thither by the necessities of a humble contractor's business, not exigent at the best. He knew how to read and write with difficulty, and he had sufficient arithmetic to serve his own modest business wants. His brother attended to these for the most part, and it is not a little pathetic to read of James Carlyle's pride and joy in his little Thomas when in the shortest time possible the boy had exhibited such



proficiency in arithmetical and reckoning matters as to elicit from his uncle the ungrudging confession (doubtless delivered with a vast sense of hopefulness that his own dire labours in that direction might now be over for good!) that the lad was as clever as himself, if not a bit superior. "I don't grudge thee thy schooling now, Tom," was the old man's dictum on the event. It would appear that James Carlyle had been remonstrated with by village "equality" folk, who never think of an act of self-sacrifice for themselves and dislike it in others, who told him that the man who educated his child but led him to despise his unlettered father. A specious and utterly infernal doctrine which might receive a passing seeming corroboration from the vanity of a boy but is hateful to the understanding heart of the adult. Every honest man must feel a gratitude to James Carlyle for his splendid repudiation of their mean advice, as to Carlyle himself for so nobly proving its essential and vicious falsehood.

This high-minded and generous resolution of James Carlyle there can be little doubt was ennobled and stimulated by the remarkable woman he had married. Neither of these could have succeeded without the other. Carlyle's debt to both was immense. It was a great resolution, and the remembrance of it and the generous love and faith that had inspired it brought glad and grateful moisture to the eyes of their famous son whenever he recalled it. When these two parents in humble life reached the momentous conclusion that something in their little first-born marked him out for that power and authority over his fellows which their own strong natures had

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dumbly craved but never gained save in a lowly village, when they resolved to educate him for the service of God and the Kirk, which in their eyes alone offered the only authority and power worth striving for, they builded far better than they knew. They conferred a lasting benefit on their world and ours of which they little dreamed. The far-reaching extent and influence of their modest, almost secret resolution, not even their wildest imaginings could in faintest fashion have realised.

Such parents easily establish a dominant place among their neighbours, and it is a mistake to imagine that the Carlyles were either poor or humble in their own domain. That domain was lowly to others, not to them. Their house was as substantial as any, one of the best buildings in the village. James Carlyle was a master mason employing "hands" or workmen besides labouring himself alongside these. He was in a position a whole world removed from that of one of his employees, though it is to be feared not a few of his son's admirers have failed to realise the distinction. Had Carlyle been compelled to slave like Burns he could never have risen as he did. A peasant by birth James Carlyle may have been, but he was no peasant in powerlessness and poverty. He had mastered his circumstances, and his son was free to master his in consequence.

If we consider his circumstances, James Carlyle not only achieved his noble purpose but actually gained wealth rapidly in addition, for the hardest part of the struggle to amass money lies in laying the foundations, in saving the pennies. The pounds follow rapidly, as the wealthy agree. As Carlyle

grew to manhood his father, far from being crippled, was further impelled to become a crofter or small farmer rather than a mason, the building trade having in his opinion passed under a cloud in whose shadow no honest craftsman could hope any longer to make a living! He raised himself in local status by doing so, and doubtless found his most eager encouragement in the son he had educated. At his death James Carlyle was possessed of property worth some one thousand pounds, a large sum to be so frugally gathered and slowly saved. He died a farmer and a man of property in his degree who had started life without a penny, capable only of the rudest manual labour, almost without hope.

We have said he was a proud man, almost aggressively dominating and independent. He was perhaps a hard taskmaster. And he had a deadly tongue. "Thou maun alter thy gait or slant the bog" (Off home over that meadow there), he once told a clumsy labourer whom he had hired to mow, whose performance of his task he considered worse than indifferent. "Thou hast every feature of a bad shearer, — high, rough, and little on't." Carlyle characteristically assumes that his father was as scrupulously truthful with regard to the nature of the work performed as in his intention to be just to the man. But one knows the reputation of the strict disciplinarian who spares neither himself nor others. His peculiarity is probably the reason so few faithful workmen make good masters. The grander spirit is lacking which by cheery encouragement exacts the last ounce of voluntary and eager labour out of a man. The greatest blunder on both sides in all industrial

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disputes is the deplorable viewing of labour from the money-making point of view which each opponent detects in the other a great deal sooner than in himself. Yet James Carlyle was no slave-driver. The heart of the man was sound and noble. From his own view he was always doing his best not his worst for all parties, but he forgot other people might reasonably enough think they were doing the same. He believed in the whip, as his son did.

Carlyle tells us he was "irascible and choleric and we all dreaded his wrath, yet passion never mastered him or maddened him." He could silence all of them by a look. What a look it must have been, the strong virile face black with anger, if it could quell the fiery spirit of his son!

Carlyle inherited his father's passionate blood, and in his youth his mother dreaded its furious disregard of consequence. A great anger at times possessed Thomas Carlyle also, and the domineering habit was ingrained. A powerful intellect and self-control held it in thrall, at least in the larger affairs of life, and scandal was averted. But it is too evident that sheer lack of self-control with respect to trifling matters and his own behaviour in his home, which he may have fancied did not count in the audit, was the real and only reason which made Carlyle "gey ill to live wi'." He was a difficult and high-strung life-companion, but so are thousands of men whose wives love and understand and forgive them. Carlyle was in fault, but surely the woman who voluntarily for her own ambition married him was the more to blame if she were less wise than old Margaret Carlyle and could not estimate the real affection his hot temper

concealed! Carlyle's mother had in fact a far more troublesome and trying life-companion than his wife, yet she never belittled him, but made the most of her destiny.

James Carlyle's wife confessed to her son that she could not reach into her husband's inmost heart. He had something within he shared with none, something inarticulate which could not find expression. Carlyle loved to think of these inarticulate depths of a father. He seemed to guess by instinct the wistful thoughts the elder cherished, the hopeless far-away look in his eyes for the promised land of speculative intellect he must never enter.

The Carlyles were independent, impatient even at the thought of aid from others, self-reliant, determined to stand firmly on their native dignity and very amply assured of the worth of that. The old father may have bared his grey head before Justices of the Peace, but he had the smallest respect for mere worldly local dignitaries and was no respecter of persons. James Carlyle indeed was a prouder even haughtier man than any landed proprietor in the neighbourhood. His son's genius has pilloried his father's landlord for us that we may note the poor man is as lofty and lordly as the rich one. One is cognizant of the fact that this high pride also passed to Thomas Carlyle as an inheritance. Carlyle too had a proud temper which stood him in good stead in the thousand shocks that merit receives from the ignorant and powerful. Any other man not possessed of it must have fallen broken-hearted before the apathy and ignorant disapprobation which greeted *Sartor*, his greatest work. It was an invaluable inheritance. Carlyle

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shared to the full his father's conviction of worth as well as his haughty pride and sense of superiority over his fellows, almost as much to the anger and inconvenience of social London as the father's had been to the little village.

The word of both was their bond. "I'll pay thee thy rent, see," James Carlyle told General Sharpe on the alert about his rent, "though my farm grew bent." Though the land were to yield nothing better than rough moorland grass, the landlord of old Carlyle should have his bargained money. Shylock would be paid to the last ounce of flesh. It is scarcely a contradiction in this world to discover that like other farmers the old man loved an "abatement."

One more characteristic of the father inherited and notably developed by the son was an inveterate habit of applying nicknames, some Scriptural or blasting epithet to ridicule an impostor or, what came to the same thing, any one the Carlyles considered an impostor, to word-paint a scene or incident in the most telling phraseology, to "take-off" persons or things, a quick intuitive, artistic, and marvellously vivid mental seizure of the vital and material in everything and everybody that came beneath their observation. The father fell back on the use of Scriptural phrases for the reason that the Bible remained his one literary acquisition. The great son had inexhaustible supplies of ammunition outwith the command of his predecessor, but possession of such a gift gave old James Carlyle an unchallenged precedence which Ecclefechan grudgingly yielded, a sullen submission to his authority, an acknowledgment of power. Through Carlyle this family trait or

gift has passed into British literature with marvellous gain in enrichment and insight, and great loss in courtesy and control.

Carlyle tells us "Thou natural, thou!" was his father's "finisher," the parting verbal kick at the adversary which closed the conversation or argument so far as old Carlyle was concerned. Characteristically he sees nothing objectionable in the habit, though it is hard to conceive that a man trained as Carlyle had been can be so forgetful of the courtesies of controversy as to fall back on the same tendency in himself for literary purposes. He at least must have been aware of its invalidity, and he had been witness of the just irritation his father had excited. He had not the excuse the old man had. In his private letters Carlyle is sometimes as unrestrained and virulent as Swift himself, while such phrases as "my wooden-headed clerical friend," "carrion Heath," and countless others reveal the same lack of restraint carried into literature. The habit grew out of all control in the end, and some of Carlyle's latest effusions against modern commercial morality lost every atom of efficacy through the sheer incoherence of their abuse.

None of the family, none even of the gentler sisters, seems to have exhibited light gaiety or mirthfulness or love of pleasure even of the most harmless description. They had almost an unholy conception of the value and use of time, and they overlooked entirely the real gains derived from play and pastime. They stand apart and outside the Scots village life which Burns has depicted so graphically. "Hallowe'en," for example, can have been nothing to

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the Carlyles. The "Pilgrim's Progress" occurs more readily in connection with them. Burns's own father, however, belonged to the same type, and the repression which strengthened a Carlyle was death to the great-hearted poet and drove him to passionate denial and excess. Fate rarely extended a smiling face on the toilers of a century ago. It required the spirit and the geniality of a Burns to laugh the grimness away, and the effort was to cost him his worldly character, and in the end his life ere even Burns succeeded. The Carlyles were all old men and women before the fruits of the sacrifice were apparent. For the rural life of Scotland to-day is sunnier and healthier since Burns lived and died. It looks almost as though in Carlyle and Burns the world were to be shown the good and the evil of the stern Scots religious upbringing.

Perhaps the one indisputably "peasant" trait in Carlyle is his persistent comparison of himself with others, intellectual pride rejoicing in the want of intellect elsewhere. He always seems to be saying, "There is a great want of intellect outside," though in Carlyle's case there is no least vestige of hypocrisy or pretence. It is really the assertion of an observed and indubitable fact which he had never learned the manner of concealing. It is the most pronounced feature in the rustic.

We have already noted the candid and outspoken delight of his father in the little boy outstripping his uncle in arithmetic, and very evidently this regrettable pitting of their child's talents against all comers was dear to the parents' hearts. They knew no wiser way, but they had generously seen to it that their son



had, and this really "peasant" trait would have been rigorously repressed by one less self-reliant, obstinate, and defiant. Carlyle's task in the world was not to suffer fools gladly, still less to find excuses for them. It was his to scorn them. There can be no question of the fact that Carlyle's intellect was far and away the greatest intellect of his age. None can doubt its supremacy. Thackeray has compared the great intellect of Swift in its overthrow to an empire falling. That of Carlyle is an empire at the height of its glory. This characteristic of Carlyle jars, however, on the reader of his biography, and in particular roused the ire of Professor Nichol, one of his biographers.

Carlyle himself believed, and assiduous family genealogists have sought to prove, that while the family at the time of his birth ranked among the peasantry, the Carlyles possessed in reality a reasonable claim to "noble" Border blood. The two facts are by no means inconsistent, for every family is really as old as another, and humble circumstances are the sure consequence of loss of lands or prestige. There had indubitably been a powerful clan of Carlyles in the old days of which no vestige of chieftainship remained, and no branch of the tribe could advance a better claim than the proud, domineering Carlyles of Ecclefechan. These might well have descended from a ruling race, for the habit of command was in their very blood. Professor Nichol, who sneers his way right through his biography of Carlyle, impressed apparently too exclusively by this peasant trait we have just been alluding to, is disposed to be very sceptical at the probabilities or possibilities

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of such a claim being established. The Professor has a smile for the gryphons, the family heraldic emblems carved on the Carlyle tombstone, and for the motto "Humilitate," which is scrolled above them. Carlyle, however, recognised the reality of such things, and was certain in his own mind that the ruling talents of his race found their origin most probably in the position occupied by his ancestors, as they had their explanation in hereditary transmission. He was firmly of belief that the truth and importance of the House of Lords lay in just such facts being true in the main, and he did once or twice apparently dream of carrying the matter beyond dispute by entering there, only the next minute to laugh at the notion. It might have been different, however, as Professor Nichol might have discovered had Carlyle obtained the great gift of children.

Indeed, hardly a thoughtful and unbiased reader of his life but must confess that if James Carlyle and his great son have no claim whatever to "blue blood," then the blueness of blood, contrary to general belief, has *no* distinguishing attribute when divorced from its pecuniary richness.

The father's intellect, as we have said, lay dormant, undeveloped. Carlyle in his beautiful tribute to his parent ventures the assertion that for sheer undeveloped strength the mind of James Carlyle was as great as that of Burns himself. He then proceeds to explain his meaning by further criticism of amazing insight. "As a man of speculation," he adds, "had culture ever unfolded him he must have gone wild and desperate as Burns; but he was a man of conduct, and work keeps all right. What strange shapeable

creatures we are !” The narrow sphere which doomed James Carlyle to labour for others saved him from the tragic fate of the sweet-souled singer. How just and merciful to Burns is Carlyle in that dictum ! How flattering, too, yet sincere and well-considered to the grim old father !

For James Carlyle thought little of Burns, and, according to his son’s testimony, had not read above three pages of his incisive verse. The father would sit silent while the younger members of his family discussed Burns, the youthful Thomas, we may be very sure, the first and most vocal always in praise and insight. But James Carlyle had once seen the poet. “I have heard him speak of once seeing Burns,” writes Carlyle, “standing in Robert Scott’s smithy” at Ecclefechan. Burns was in the village on excise service in the summer of 1795, some months before Carlyle was born. One would like to have known what Margaret Carlyle, a newly married wife at the time, thought of the tall and swarthy man who bore the stooping shoulders of a ploughman, “with boots on (top-boots) like a well-dressed farmer walking down the village street on the opposite side of the burn.” For she had insight, and as none of her sex yet resisted the sorcery of those marvellous eyes which glowed with the fire of life, her sweeter soul might have penetrated the mystery. A woman like her, had she entered his life, might have saved him.

Little could the poet who foresaw so bravely and trustfully have imagined the great gift which awaited himself from an uninviting silent house he scarcely glanced at in the village he almost resentfully tarried in. It is a suggestive picture the old man’s retrospect

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conjuges up from the past. The shadows were gathering thick and fast when Burns saw peaceful Ecclefechan. In another year, while yet the infant Carlyle was in long clothes, he lay dead, the dreary sordid tragedy endured, the victory won. How it would have cheered his stricken soul on his lonely death-bed to have known what the years held for him in a little infant in that Ecclefechan house or the relationship he yet would bear to the world-wide acknowledgment of his fame! For the genius of Burns finds in Carlyle its first, most confident and inspired exponent. Carlyle's insight lies at the root of our national hero-worship of Burns.

"Dialect," its meaning and causes, is perhaps one of the less important mysteries of life, but dialect is expressive, characteristic, and marvellously diagnostic. It seems as though it were largely bound up with pre-railway conditions, yet isolation cannot be the sole explanation. It is apparently the inferior form of the same phenomenon which entails different languages on adjoining countries. The same curious fact results that people residing next door as it were to each other use different methods of conveying speech to one another without any great tendency to assimilate the processes. In dialect the distinction is far more superficial and the language is the same, but it is quite as diagnostic as the other. Annandale, and with it Ecclefechan, has a pronounced dialect of its own, a sort of sing-song lilt or cadence quite incommunicable to paper, and this also passed to Thomas Carlyle as an inheritance. If he ever employed in childhood the native inflections like "I'se" or "I is" for "I'm" or "I am" as the old people did, he would

abandon these when he passed beyond the village, but the lilt itself, the sing-song cadence in modified form, distinguished him to the end. Long residence in London among the best speaking elements of society there brought little change in this respect. The "Annandale accent" was as noticeable in the Lord Rector's address of 1866 as in the speech of Thomas Carlyle undergraduate in 1809. That he never shook it off argues that he had no wish to do so and recognised no necessity. The Ecclefechan lilt and the village tailor's suits of clothes, together with the apple-red cheeks of the rustic schoolboy, remained with Carlyle to the last, characteristic, a part of him. Carlyle forced himself and all of Ecclefechan he implied on the world. But the world forced little in return.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY YEARS—ANNAN ACADEMY AND THE BURGHES' MEETING-HOUSE

"There is a kind of citizen which Britain used to have, very different from the millionaire Hebrews, Rothschild money-changers, Demosthenes Disraelis, and inspired young Goschens and their 'unexampled prosperity.' Weep, Britain, if the latter are among the honourable you now have!"

"Such 'poor scholars and gentlemen of Christ' as I have nowhere met with in monasteries or churches, among Protestant or Papal clergy, in any country of the world."—*Reminiscences*, "Edward Irving."

"EDUCATION," says Froude in his eloquent biography of Carlyle, "is a passion in Scotland." It is more. It is a necessity. No race was so convinced already of Carlyle's gospel of work as his own. Scotland has always known that the world belonged to the worker, and knowing that, Scotland has always tried to fit the toiler as well as possible for his task. Fortunately, the Kirk of Scotland, following in that respect the Mother Church of Rome far more heedfully than the Church of England does, is thoroughly democratic, and the avenue to the Kirk at least, the only one open to her poor, has always been accessible even to the poorest.

A religious country with a religious peasantry will

always consider the "Ministry," or the service of God, a service peculiarly acceptable, and even in modern commercial days, when the Kirk offers no greater prizes to the ambitious than the ordinary income of secular work, though certainly as good, the ministry tends more and more to be desirable to the peasantry rather than the wealthier classes. The divine "call" could never be quite so abundant and frequent as it is among them, if it were not accompanied by what appear to be solid secular advantages. The Scots peasantry have always looked at both, and to them at least the secular gain is considerable. So much so, that only the stronger and more able among them realise their determined purpose of training their children, or most promising child, for the ministry. There need be little doubt but that both the "call" and the secular advantages appealed to the strong-willed, ever-advancing Carlyles. The ministry seemed very desirable to both father and mother, but to the mother more purely in its sacred character, as by far the most honourable sphere of labour for the gifted child already they knew entrusted to them.

The old folk were Seceders from the Kirk of the Establishment, and like many others had ceased attendance at their parish kirk. That indeed was but too often a lazy and indifferently moral token of the uses of an "establishment" in encouraging the idleness and irresponsibility of a minister, rather than an efficient method of guaranteeing his income against unfair dependence on the flock he was there to admonish and reprove. The Seceders, according to Carlyle's view of them, had no wish or desire to emphasise or continue dissent as dissent,

but history shows differently. Yet at this time it was so far true that they had no schools or training colleges of their own, and the Seceder's child was sent, as Carlyle was sent, to the ordinary parish school or the rural academies, and thence to the metropolitan town college which Kirk and State provided.

Even in pre-Reformation days Scotland had its "singing schools" at every monastery and at least some "singing" or choral school in many parishes. Naturally, however, the Reformers were keener to educate the laity than the ancient Church had been, because it was more necessary for their existence and the triumph of the freedom they at least professed. It was as much forced upon them perhaps as loved for its own sake, for no Church ever desired education for the better equipment of the civilian or as an end in itself.

Certain it is and highly honourable to the Reformers that Scotland had so many parish schools, wherein capable teaching might be obtained by the poorest, in an age when no other country in the world could be said even to tolerate education for the masses. "One in every parish" had been Knox's aim, and he seems to have secured it in more liberal fashion than might have been expected. We may thankfully admit the ancient Kirk produced a nation pre-inclined to education when at such a period and in so harassed and haggard a country such results were achieved by the Reformers.

Some of the provinces of Scotland possess indeed notable scholastic and educational advantages. Annandale is one of these, and Carlyle was more fortunate



than he ever confessed in being born there. Scott had been born in Edinburgh, where also the educational facilities were phenomenal. So had Hume. Burns was born near Ayr, another favoured district, though in his case distance and his father's encumbrances operated to put the advantages beyond his grasp. Carlyle suffered from no such disadvantage, as indeed no Scotsman of the first rank has done. Little wonder the Scotsman never lived—not even the haughty, depreciatory Carlyle—who did not gratefully love and honour his native land! And it is pathetic that he to whom she proved unkindest loved and honoured her most.

Few schools of that time can have been superior to Annan Academy, where Carlyle was not only taught but himself taught mathematics. There seems to have been an adequate staff of masters and a thorough curriculum provided for the young rural Scot. It may be doubted whether Byron's Harrow or Eton itself was in reality a better educational establishment, if indeed as good.

The little Thomas duly passed in time to Annan Academy, for Annan is distant some six miles only from Ecclefechan. But naturally the boy was not fit to remain as a weekly boarder anywhere till he was of stable age, and the banishment to Annan which bore so hardly on him did not take place till Carlyle was in his tenth year. His boyhood's education, least important for the intellect yet profoundly potent for the formation of character, was already far advanced in reality by that time; and his eventual destination to the ministry had been determined while yet the little timid, mother-

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trustful, tearful boy lived under his mother's constant supervision.

We have said Carlyle's mother could not write at this time, but she could read. It is characteristic of her love, ambition, and devotion that such a woman, a mason's wife, busy and occupied day and night with family cares, cook, servant, housekeeper, laundrywoman for a growing family, with that family constantly increasing every second or third year, could also take upon herself to teach the "letters" to her eldest child. Laborious as the task must always be, it was a marvellous feat for her.

Carlyle tells us he "does not remember when," so early was the process begun. Yet that memory was wonderfully retentive and stretched back fitfully to his third year. He cannot have been older than six when he first went to "Tom Donaldson's school at Ecclefechan—a severely correct kind of man, Tom, from Edinburgh." The parish school was about a mile distant from the village, and like the parish kirk itself, was situated at Hoddam near that Repentance Tower which, rising from the trees around, is so conspicuous a feature of the landscape. The boys and girls of Ecclefechan trooped merrily along the wooded lane between, the little Carlyle, one imagines, moving already more sedately than his companions, or alone.

The life of the schoolboy in one sense is the same in all ages both in villages and in cities, according to the different classes of status the boys belong to, but different centuries reveal certain differences also. Old customs and schoolboy habits are given up as notions change of what is moral or expedient or

fitting. Old characteristics grow obsolete. In the eighteenth century, for example, cock-fighting was indulged in by village schoolboys as by their elders in all ranks everywhere. Often the schoolmaster had the beaten cocks as perquisites, a heaven-sent addition to a meagre salary. So, too, glasses of very weak "toddy," or water charged with the minutest quantity of whisky, were handed round the boys on great speech-day occasions. But these customs were disappearing, and the earnest Carlyles frowned on such trifling, while their little boy scarce needed the parental injunction to restrain him from sharing in the rude, robust schoolboy life of the period. We have his own frequent confession that he was miserable among boys. Carlyle, however, was always popular among the worthier or more studious, though he was contemptuous and outspoken. The "forty million fools" mood was prominent from the first.

"Sandie Beattie," Carlyle proceeds, "subsequently a Burgher minister of Glasgow, I well remember 'examining me.' He reported me complete in English; that I must go to Latin. Latin accordingly with what enthusiasm! But the schoolmaster himself did not know Latin. I gradually got altogether swamped and bewildered under him. Reverend Mr. Johnstone of Ecclefechan, or rather first his son home from college and already teaching a nephew or cousin, had to take me in hand, and once pulled afloat I made rapid and sure headway."

Carlyle, in fact, was always a quick or brilliant scholar, possessed of a singularly tenacious memory, with an "original" mind as well as a studious. He

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made rapid headway always, and dawning opportunity and widening horizon proved unfailingly the native power and supremacy of his keen intellect. Again and again will the reader observe how fortunate too in his circumstances Carlyle was, however much he grumbled at his lot. No man ever had better chances or more unfailingly utilised every one of them to the utmost. No man ever had better friends or met greater kindness who so marvellously out-distanced all his fellows. These facts have been too much overlooked by his biographers.

Here he owed all-important aid to the Johnstones. Oftener, however, the benefactor gets scant acknowledgment. But the reader must be informed that the poorer Scots of Carlyle's day enjoyed inestimable advantages in the way of education such as few classes ever possessed in any nation at any time. Among them were always, in those days of Kirk patronage, "stickit ministers" (who failed to charm a patron and became parish dominies as the best substitute), young willing aspirants to the ministry also, who would tutor children for the pittance which kept body and soul together and helped them forward to their ambition, and these were the best-educated, college-trained men of their districts, far superior, it is to be confessed, to the ill-paid, little-regarded elementary teacher of to-day. When patronage was abolished in the fifties, this inestimable but accidental gain from its continuance disappeared also, and the educational loss which resulted to the poor has not yet been recovered.

Most stimulating and educative for the young mind of Carlyle were the home services, or family

worship of the father when he "took the Book" and officiated as high-priest of the household, and the public worship every "Sabbath" when father and mother (if no infant's care detained her) led the boy into the cottage meeting-house, "thatched with heath," which Carlyle has brought so vividly back to remembrance. There the little Teufelsdröckh first saw the "highest whom I knew on earth" (his father and mother, *not* any local dignitary!) "bowed down in awe unspeakable before a greater in Heaven."

He has described for us "the poor scholars and gentlemen of Christ" some of the older and more devout of the preachers at these gatherings most truly were. The Reverend John Johnstone, already alluded to, who (or his son) was at hand to help him to Latin, he tells us, "was the priestliest man I ever under any ecclesiastical guise was privileged to look upon. . . . He taught me Latin, and otherwise produced me far higher benefit." Teachers like this venerable clergyman were indeed far more educative than those of any Academy. The Reverend Mr. Johnstone "sleeps not far from my father in Ecclefechan churchyard, the teacher and the taught. 'Blessed, I again say, are the dead that die in the Lord.'"

The humorous side of the same solemn gatherings (a religious people is generally daringly humorous even in religion) impressed itself no less strongly on his sardonic mind, and in his recollections of Edward Irving he has thrown reminiscent flash on the strangely assorted company, ludicrous, quaint, and sometimes grotesque, who gathered weekly in that Burghers' meeting-house. Curious figures some

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of them were, for every community has its hypocrites as well as its "gentlemen of Christ." In his youth indeed it is likely that the humorous side was more frequently uppermost in Carlyle's scornful, even sceptical, mind. Yet he had received their creed for ever.

Among the Seceders and from his father and mother, especially from the contemptuous talk of the father, the boy heard enough downright sincerity of speech to let a healthy democratic mode of regarding his "betters" (those, that is to say, more fortunately placed by Providence in earth's favoured places) sink deep into his mind. Carlyle was all his life singularly observant, and, like all boys, he was imitative. He heard much that went to strengthen the aristocratic, authoritative tendency also, the domineering, masterful habit, inherent in his very blood. Few boys ever possessed more sharply featured exemplars in their own homes, or found as much there they might well imitate to advantage.

He has told us he feared the stern, rough-speaking father ; but it is plain he never feared, or had cause to fear, the anxious, gentler mother, so ceaseless in her love and solicitude. She was gentler only in comparison with the grimmer father, for she never seems to have been other than the uncultured peasant in daily life among her neighbours. She was no more indulgent of weakness or failure. Thomas was her eldest, consecrated to God already in her pious heart. He was the "mother's boy" particularly, though she loved all. It was therefore a bitter day for the boy when at last he set out on the first stage of that long march which, beginning with this farewell to Eccle-

fechan, finally ended in London, with Carlyle at the head of British Literature, having courteously refused the Grand Cross of the Bath and accepted the Prussian Order of Merit as well as the Lord Rectorship of Edinburgh University; a long, long march and a marvellous end even for its worldly acquisitions, unprized, unsought, and therefore perhaps so freely offered.

The boy had cousins in Annan, or at least one cousin, "kind of maternal cousin or half cousin," called Waugh, and of course an "uncle" of sorts, this Waugh's father. The cousin graduated later at Edinburgh in medicine, but as Dr. Waugh seems to have been unsuccessful. He is of importance solely from the fact that in his rooms in Rose Street, while he was a student in Edinburgh, Carlyle met his first, best, and most helpful friend, the strangely constituted, vain, but sincere Edward Irving.

To this Waugh senior his mother must have made application that her son should board with him while attending the Academy, for so it was arranged. Every Saturday possibly the little boy could go home for the "week end," and did so. For the rest, Waugh Senior "was one of the most respectable yet laughable of mankind," and apparently satisfied the always "difficult" Carlyle in the matter of clean, wholesome lodgings.

Carlyle describes for us in *Sartor Resartus* (under the foreign disguise the "German" dress of the romance necessitated) the scene when he set out from Ecclefechan one bright May morning (May 26, 1809) accompanied by his father and mother—time, 6 a.m.—on this journey for Annan; the mother

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merely "to set him on his way in good heart," the father to take him the entire and doleful distance. The "steeple clock (then striking eight)," "the aproned or disaproned burghers," the "little dog in mad terror rushing past (some human imps had tied a tin kettle to its tail)": all bear witness to the vivid impression the actual scene had made on his mind.

Teufelsdröckh's schoolfellows persecuted him. So of course did Carlyle's. Boys are cruel, and Annan boys resembled all others. His mother had made things very much harder for him by extracting a promise that under no circumstances of provocation would he retaliate by violence, and very naturally the boys discovered his disinclination to return blows, and, boy-like, took fullest advantage. Doubtless she feared his passionate temper, over which he had so little control, and dreaded worse things would befall him. He was very miserable, and perhaps he found his social status a hindrance. Boys are snobbish as a general rule. But as time went on either he broke through the maternal injunctions or he procured absolution from his mother for the promise, and things improved. Teufelsdröckh was "in an unusual degree morally courageous," however, and one is certain Carlyle was.

In the same book he is very scornful of and very little grateful to the "hidebound pedants" who nevertheless taught him so well that he never at any time found the slightest disadvantage arising from defective education. Had he attended more to the courtesies and amenities of life and, forgetting his scorn, his hauteur and "family worth,"



striven to remove instead of increase the gulf between him and his schoolfellows, Carlyle had been happier and less deservedly lonely.

The mere fact is that Annan Academy was everything and more to Carlyle than he had any right to expect. If the "hidebound pedants" "taught mechanically," it is to be feared Thomas Carlyle did the same when later he undertook the same task in the same Academy and detested the work intensely. When he was a pupil the masters were "hidebound," when he is a master the pupils are "dull louts." It is an unhappy characteristic.

*Sartor Resartus* is tinged with the scorn and pity and sarcasm of Carlyle himself in the day it was written. A kindlier, yet similar picture, of his boyhood at Annan and the Town College, Edinburgh, was drawn by him in the projected and abandoned attempt at a novel—hopeless, heavy, and inartistic to a degree—which he once hoped to write, and through a few chapters persevered in, the so-called novel, or sustained soliloquy of *Wotton Reinfred*. There is not the slightest doubt Wotton is Carlyle, at school, at the University, and in love: the "resemblances" and "allusions" even to the "meagre hunger-bitten philosophy of the duenna aunt" and the heroine "Jane"—are convincing. Of Wotton, Carlyle writes: "His progress was the boast of the teachers; and the timid, still boy, devoted to his tasks and rarely mingling in the pastimes never in the riots of his fellows, would have been a universal favourite in any community less selfish and tyrannical than one composed of schoolboys. It may seem strange to say so: but among these little men

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and although the young ones, guided by Thomas, were young in that period which gladdened Thackeray, the era of the publication of the Waverley Novels, and although they read these with keenest delight, novels and novel writing were always, for Carlyle, very inferior occupations for the human mind, as were all things designed to amuse or alleviate misery. It remained a serious want or defect in him, and might well have given him pause as to whether the Miltonic notion (which was Judaic also) of God as a Taskmaster was any truer, or more beneficial to humanity, than the Christian one wherein He is likened to a Father. Yet it never seems to have done so.

"There is," says Froude, "no mention of 'holidays' in these Teufelsdröckh (or 'Reinfred') imaginings, though holidays there must have been at Annan Academy."

A serious and industrious boy he proved an apt, clever scholar, quick to learn and observant as few boys have ever been. Witness the problem that presented itself to his boyish eyes at Annan of the curious black teeth, plainly visible in the mouth of "old Adam Hope," Irving's schoolmaster, "till at length I found they were of cork, the product of Adam's frugal penknife, and could be removed at pleasure." How many boys of his age at Annan or elsewhere ever pondered a problem so calmly, wisely, and observantly?

Above all, Carlyle became well grounded in mathematics at Annan, and even inspired with profound respect and love for them. To his Annan teacher of mathematics, Morley, he acknowledged

more gratefully than he generally did his debt for important benefit conferred. Probably the gratitude sprang more readily when he found he had a real talent for mathematics, and could hope to rise to eminence thereby as at worst he could earn a livelihood. Indeed, Carlyle first appeared before the world as a mathematician or teacher of mathematics—though he began so, of course, with his eye on the Kirk beyond.

Greek was little favoured in Scots schools then as now. Carlyle professes that of Greek he learned "little beyond the alphabet" at Annan Academy. In Latin it is plain he received a thorough "grounding," and even read some way among Latin authors. He found no difficulty later, as so many have found, when he entered the University and drew on his school-time stores. In Greek only had he a vacuum to fill, but the Greek "Professor" of that day required only the veriest trifle to fill it!

At Annan Academy, however, did occur one notable scene, Carlyle's first glimpse of Edward Irving. The scene is worthy of mention because Carlyle (and the world for its Carlyle) owed more to Irving than the world is accustomed to think, or even than the self-reliant Carlyle himself consciously confessed. Without Irving Carlyle might never have attained the success he did. So shy, indeed, sarcastic and generally disliked by the hurried or worldly was Carlyle, and his friends at first so little able to assist him to his ambitions, that had Irving not stretched out the ready, eager, helping hand for Carlyle's second school-mastership, for his introduction to magazine editors and publishers as later to the

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Bullers also and London recognition generally, it is possible that Carlyle might have been a grand failure rather than a complete success, defeated before he had commenced his contest. But for Irving it is conceivable he might have died an ordinary, briefly remembered "Professor of Mathematics."

Irving had returned from a triumphant University course to the Academy he had left two years before young Carlyle entered it. He was then a tall, well-groomed, fashionably dressed young fellow, says Carlyle, who sat there disdainfully interested and observant to the last obscure detail of everything visible, "drinking in" the whole scene. His clear cut face surmounted by a wealth of coal black hair was disfigured by a marked squint of the eyes; yet the boy thought Irving looked very brave, and he and his companions sat mute and reverential while the hero talked familiarly to his old schoolmasters, laughing pleasantly. Carlyle did not then speak to Irving, did not "know" him as the phrase goes, but he looked and observed and forgot nothing. Poor Irving was yet to pass into Hell in that same Annan, and be expelled his "Kirk" there.

Once at least old James Carlyle, being in Annan (probably to "settle" with Waugh senior for his boy's board), called at the Academy to see the young Thomas, instigated thereto apparently by his wife's ceaseless anxieties and questionings, as well as by his own affection. The old man sat down beside his son and talked to him, the son thankful and surprised that his companions regarded him so little, and did not "guy him." But the old man's type was familiar to them and evidently they behaved well.

Three years passed quietly and, in spite of his gloomy boy terrors, not unpleasantly at the well-equipped Academy of his native Annandale. Carlyle was in his fourteenth year when his masters reckoned he was prepared and ready for the next stage in the progress of all destined for the Kirk, a course of Arts and Divinity at the College of Edinburgh. So he left school in the late summer of that year—"for good"; and for a few years Annan saw him no more, save during College recess and an occasional revisit.

At Ecclefechan there were prolonged hesitations and anxieties on the part of his mother, with her boy parting finally from home control. Fourteen was an amazing age for a boy to be sent to a University, to live in lodgings, free from paternal control, free to sink or swim as his boyhood and character determined; but, in poor Scotland of that day, there was no other course, for as yet were no "secondary" classes and the boys were aged quickly in a hard school.

His mother was constant in imploring him to "read his Bible," to be good and to fear God, as mothers before and since have done and sons forgotten. She was practical also, preparing the modest outfit, arranging with him, under the guidance of such as had gone to College before, about the monthly box the carrier was to carry into Edinburgh on one of his bi-weekly jaunts, or to convey back with its soiled linen when it was empty. Hams, sacks of oatmeal, butter, eggs, poultry, all the good things of home were still to be at her dear son's call, and Carlyle was ever supplied with the best of his

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father's cheer. If it was a stern home and an humble it was as kindly a home as any in Scotland.

Writers write foolishly and admiringly of the "poverty" of Scottish students of Carlyle's day and since. Men love to look back on a "stern" boyhood of high thinking and semi-starvation. Facts are twisted. Much nonsense is talked, written and believed, "swallowed." A young man would be a poor mortal, who, in a furnished room (no matter how modest its size), could not live cor enjoyably and well, with the "monthly of provincial Scotland and his home to : every day what the wealthy citizen can s obtain unless adulterated beyond enduran at Oxford is not generally so luxurious plucky "Kailyaird" writers seem to infer have lived there not half so comfortably as ' his Scots college. Carlyle was ever hard to the matter of food and lodgings. He ha primitive log cabin, but a plenteous and we home. There are many degrees in pover the Englishman recognises less generally Scot.

The winter Session of Edinburgh Tow opened in November, so in November 18 Carlyle, escorted the first few miles by his : mother, in the grey mist and darkness of a l morning, set out to meet the companion w he had trysted (as one already past masi art) to tramp to Edinburgh to attend Colle. ses. The village carrier was to follow with his luggage, or it had already preceded. These were the days before railways, and the coach was expensive as certainly,

for young legs, or in these times for sturdy old ones, it was considered no necessity. Many a man and woman walked his or her fifty miles a day, tramping ? with bare feet, carrying shoes and stockings round their necks wherever the country allowed, wherever stretched drove road or grass track and no township existed to cast oblique eye on their gait.

At Airock Stane he turned round for a last look at home, thereafter out of sight ; then strove sadly but onward with "Tom Smail," whose name  
ory has thus strangely preserved.

1. King's

## CHAPTER III

### THE TOWN COLLEGE OF KING JAMES, EDINBURGH

*"Gaudeamus igitur  
Iuvenes dum sumus."*

"Few sights have been more impressive to me than the sudden one I had of the 'Outer House' in Parliament Square" (the Supreme Courts of Scotland) "on the evening of November 9th, 1809, some hours after my arrival in the city for the first time. We had walked some twenty miles that day, the third day of our journey from Ecclefechan: my companion one 'Tom Smail,' who had already been to college last year, and was thought to be a safe guide and guardian to me. He was some years older than myself, had been at school along with me, though never in my class. A very innocent, conceited, insignificant, but strict minded, orthodox creature, for whom, knowing him to be of no scholarship or strength of judgment, I had privately very small respect, though civilly following him about in things he knew better than I. As in the streets of Edinburgh for example on my first evening there! On my journey thither he had been wearisome, far from entertaining, mostly silent, having indeed nothing to say. He stalked on, generally some steps ahead,



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languidly whistling through his teeth some similitude of a wretched Irish tune which I knew too well as that of a still more wretched doggerel song called the 'Belfast Shoemaker,' most melancholy to poor me given up to my bits of reflections in the silence of the moors and hills."

So writes Carlyle as introduction to his reminiscences of one who was yet to prove a good friend to him, though he knew it not at the moment, Lord Jeffrey, a real "Law-ward" (it may be explained to the non-Scot) or "Lord" of Session or High Court, not a peer of the realm.

He goes on to tell us about that famous journey across country by the old "drove roads" and Moffat, to the capital, and he gives a vivid picture of the scene in the Parliament House itself. Written fifty-eight years after the event, the picture is astonishingly minute, one of the very best pictures of that long vanished arrangement for the administration of Justice, the Supreme Courts as they were housed and filled in 1809.

The young fellows took three days to the journey, walking thirty miles a day. We may be more luxurious to-day and this old-fashioned mode of travel would actually be more expensive than any other nowadays, but the present-day student may be excused from sighing now and then for the fresh-air, fascinating habits of his fathers. The students, however, had many such journeys, and doubtless the repetition palled. "Tom Smail" had his excuse, and Carlyle might have conceded it. Carlyle was always a great walker, and we shall find his early Scottish years brightened considerably by numerous walking tours.

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He did not always, or probably more than once or twice, walk to Edinburgh, however. When he had money of his own earning at least, he aided his hardy feet by means of the coach. The coach could be caught at Moffat and other places. Carriers too and kindly farmers helped occasionally those compelled to walk in the pre-railway period.

Edinburgh University, the first and only Protestant University in Scotland, created amid heartbreaking disappointments out of great poverty by the Town Council of Edinburgh operating on the clownish mind of James the Sixth, had in the early years of the nineteenth century risen to high popularity and fame in Britain. Dugald Stewart was lecturing and attracting fashionable young men from London, such as Temple (Palmerston to be), Brougham, Sydney Smith, and Jeffrey. There were probably no fewer than fifteen hundred students annually at this time—a large number for the building then existing. Walter Scott had sat there under Professor Dalzell, picking up what grain of Greek might be found in his classroom, and Dalzell had called him “a dunce who would remain a dunce” twenty years before Carlyle entered the University gates. Scott at least gained little there. Carlyle gained a great deal.

The present University buildings had not been built in 1809, far less the handsome New College devoted to Medicine. Not only were the old College buildings unspeakably ill adapted and shabby, confusedly arranged and in evil repair, but already a beginning had been made with the ambitious plan of Adam (modified by Playfair later), and the dark,

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dingy classrooms, with the mean and ill-arranged, indifferently stocked old library of grossly insufficient dimensions, were located meanwhile in the midst of new building operations and the confusion brought by the tearing down of old buildings, amidst dust, sand, and whirling rubbish—a most disgraceful and deplorably harassing period. And so it continued long after Carlyle had left—for well-nigh quarter of a century longer.

Teufelsdröckh is very severe on the poor old University he attended, and so was Carlyle. But it is only fair to point out that the University was not to blame; while the country was at death-grapple with Napoleon and needing every penny of obtainable money for war, not educational purposes. The University at that time was not fit to be a University, but no discredit attached to it because of that. It was unavoidable. There was simply no money in the Treasury for anything but war.

Dugald Stewart gave place to philosopher Brown, his son-in-law, in 1810; but Dalzell taught Greek, and Leslie was the Professor of Mathematics (later of Natural Philosophy). Christison, father of the better known Sir Robert Christison, was the Professor of Humanity, and Meiklejohn taught Divinity. Carlyle owed less or more to all of these, and he has given sarcastic portraits of one or two of them.

John Knox had warned the Kirk in the last letter he ever wrote not to become dependent on the University, and the General Assembly inspired by him (though it hesitated occasionally) had never consented to what the University thought advisable, that all ministers should have graduated in Arts

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before proceeding to study Divinity. But they had agreed that at least every minister should have passed through the Arts course whether he graduated or not. The like regulation indeed holds to-day as in 1809. For the Divinity course itself, in 1809, the regulations were considerably easier (for the humble student) in Carlyle's time than they are to-day. For the arrangement by which he hoped to reach the church pulpit of four years' University and annual test preaching carried on for some years more is now abandoned in favour of the ordinary three years' Divinity course, following on one in Arts, a thorough University training.

Carlyle will be found a student attending the University once more in 1818; but there is a gap of schoolmastering years between that period (when he attended the Scots Law class) and 1814 when his University course proper as Divinity student came to an end. His true University period is 1809-14.

He proved as diligent and industrious a student as he had already shown himself a schoolboy. Too original for a class prize-taker, he read voraciously in the Library rather than committed his Professor's lectures to memory, the one feat wherein the prize-taker excels. Prize-takers seldom or never attain after fame; because they exhaust themselves in shining to-day rather than laboriously drudge in preparing the shining garment of to-morrow. Their views are short. But the man of genius has "long long thoughts," and is inclined to rebel against discipline rather than to fall too quietly beneath the yoke.

The students have their debating Societies and

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the Theological Society existed then, but the records have been lost. As likely as not Carlyle was never a member of it. He was shy and kept to himself, never able to boast of more than a very few chosen intimates. He had, as matter of fact, few friends in Edinburgh ; his family had no relations, and local good feeling in Ecclefechan was unable to proffer introductions to hospitable Edinburgh houses, even had these been acceptable. For the most part Carlyle had an intensely vivid conception of the duty and necessity before him of reading hard and preparing for the unknown future. According to the Scots University system, Professors (not tutors) teach every day. The student attends his hour or hours in classes and goes back to his private lodgings. Outside the University gates there is no manner of University control over him. He is free—to go to the Devil or not, as Providence and his own temperament determine. Scotland has a marvellous confidence in her sons. Rarely is it altogether disappointed. In Carlyle's case certainly it was not. His was the type which could not have brooked the restraint of Oxford, and must have been injured there. The Scots system suits our Carlyles.

Professor Christison, he says, could never distinguish him from a certain Irving Carlyle, an older red-headed youth, with wild big buck teeth, "the worst Latinist of my acquaintance," and it is plain Carlyle never forgave him. He is equally modest concerning Leslie, who in the mathematical classroom took no special notice of him, he thought. But that he must have been wrong is proved by Leslie's recommendation of him as a teacher of mathematics both for Annan and Kirkcaldy.

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The Principal of the University at this time was a certain Baird, who became such on becoming "son-in-law" of the Lord Provost; for from its foundation, till quite recently, the University suffered often as well as benefited from its close association with the Edinburgh Town Council, who were, and are still to a great extent, its patrons. Baird succeeded Robertson, and was succeeded by Brewster. Carlyle never mentions Baird, but indeed the student comes into no contact with the Principal.

Carlyle's library list has been unearthed, the list kept for each student who has deposited his guinea guarantee against evanishment books and all. It showed conclusively (like Darwin's) that his interests then were literary rather than professional. He read *Gil Blas* then and the witty but indecent Congreve, Rabelais, Swift, and in particular and to purpose, Laurence Sterne; read widely, surprisingly, audaciously, and without harm. Did the pure mind ever yet receive harm from books?

In *Wotton Reinfred* as in *Sartor Resartus* the hero passes through a University. The picture is really the same in both, for it is Carlyle's. That of Sartor is well known, but Wotton's University has escaped his biographers. Here it is, however, and it is less grotesque than the other:—

"It was a University in which the great principle of spiritual liberty was admitted in its broadest sense and nature was left to all, not only without misguidance, but without any guidance at all. Wotton's tasks were easy of performance, or rather the performance of them was recommended not enforced; while for the rest he was left to choose his own

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society and form his own habits, and had unlimited command of reading. What a wide world rose before him as he read, and felt, and saw with as yet unworn avidity! Young nature was combining with this strange education to unfold the Universe to him, in its most chaotic aspect."

"It was a wondrous Nowhere that his spirit dwelt in."

"To all this, moreover, the exasperating influence of solitude was superadded; in fact, Wotton's manner of existence was little less secluded than ever: for though the persecutions of his schoolfellows had gradually died away as he grew more able to resist them, his originally backward temper had nowise been improved by such treatment. Indeed a keen and painful feeling of his own weakness, added to a certain gloomy consciousness of his real intrinsic superiority, rendered him at once suspicious and contemptuous of others."

That is, one would fancy, a faithful portrait of Carlyle, the more piquant and truthful because he is so unconscious of sitting for it. Carlyle had not the vestige of an ability to invent a character. He drew himself here, or rather, he simply narrates and draws nothing. He had literally no invention. As a novel, *Wotton Reinfred* if completed must have proved an appalling failure.

But more intimate writing follows. The moral character of Wotton is that of Carlyle at this 1809-14 period, and therefore interesting.

"Besides, in the conversation of his equals he truly felt little sympathy: their speculations were of far more earthly matters than his; and in their

amusements, too often riotous and libertine, his principles forbade him to participate. Only with the little knot of his countrymen in the narrowest sense of that word did he stand in any sort of relation: and even of these he often felt as if their intercourse were injuring him and should be abandoned, as if their impure influences were contaminating and seducing him. Contaminate him they did, but seduce him they could not. Polished steel may be breathed on without being rusted, but not long or often without being dimmed. Wotton fought hard with evil; for fiercely were the depths of his fiery nature assailed: he was not conquered, yet neither did he conquer without loss, and these contests added new uproar to the discord within."

Carlyle must have been dangerously near becoming a prig at this time; but the laughter bubbling in him proved too broad and brotherly. It is not known when exactly he wrote *Wotton Reinfred*. Certainly he wrote it after he had met Jane Welsh and possibly after he had married her. It may have been intended as a joint pre-nuptial performance, and perhaps was thrown aside under the stimulus of her mocking laughter at its patent impossibility. But her heart must have told her it revealed the purity of her lover. Why was the fragment preserved? Who preserved it? These are interesting questions.

The library of Edinburgh University taught him one thing especially which influenced his whole career. The wide unguided reading there showed him that the human mind can never rest content on "mathematics," not even on Newton's *Principia*.



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There were deeps beyond, unlit and uncharted. It was a notable discovery for the narrow, self-sufficient, rustic youth to make. A manse was little likely to content him.

For four years he attended the classes, passing to and fro between Ecclefechan and Edinburgh. He does not seem to have "tutored" at this period or to have supported himself by doing so either partially or completely. He was still dependent on the love and bounty of home, never grudged him. The knowledge galled, however, for Carlyle was prouder than his own father and knew that father's opinions. There were no summer sessions in the Arts and Divinity Faculties, so that some summers at least would be spent at home, reading, preparing, dreaming, working. About this time James Carlyle was leaving the mason trade, finding (says his son) that the good days of sound work and adequate payment for building were over. Did he never wonder whether a hundred years earlier men said the same thing, or whether a hundred years later they would still be saying it? It is a subjective not objective phenomenon, though Carlyle's deep constitutional pessimism never recognised that. James Carlyle, having made a little money, turned eagerly to the trade on which his heart had probably always been fixed, that of a farmer. And he started in a modest, not too hopeful, way as a crofter in the neighbourhood, firstly at Mainhill, a "wet, clayey spot" near Ecclefechan. But the "flitting" took place in 1815. The old home in the Ecclefechan street was still Carlyle's own in his University vacations.

Ambition was at work within him, and in these

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days Edinburgh, if not so famous a centre as it had been in the days of Robertson and Boswell and Hume and Burns, was still a literary and far-shining metropolis, brilliant as a sun, *not* the planet it now is. Railways had not yet inflicted on it all the evils of centralisation. Carlyle was to be himself the first great Scotsman to listen to the call of London, to avail himself of the discarded benefits of the Union.

Boswell had died in the year of Carlyle's birth. Robertson, Principal and historian, had died two years earlier. Hume was dead. Dr. Cullen and Black had passed away, but another generation had taken up the tradition. Scott had won fame as a poet and the Waverley Novels were waiting in the future. Jeffrey was already at the bar, restlessly rising in his profession. Leyden had gone abroad, leaving boisterous memories behind. The *Edinburgh Review* had appeared in 1802 clad in its "buff and blue," Fox-whig colours, and Brougham, Sydney Smith, and Jeffrey were reviewing in it, in a new, slap-dash, "this will never do," style which was certainly lively. The New Town of Edinburgh and the terraces facing the Forth were in course of construction. It was an interesting enough city for the observant eyes of the roughly clad, but neat and tidy, rustic student from Annandale with the country clothes. These eyes saw everything there was to be seen, and the lips beneath them uttered amazing and sarcastic comments on some of the sights they saw.

In later years, with the same eyes dimmed for ever by hopeless, despairing sorrow, Carlyle wrote reminiscences, and the grey tint of his life then was

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unfairly transferred to the young eager life of the past. Impatient he always was, restlessly if unconsciously ambitious. He could never be content, otherwise he would have "stayed there." His father was not wealthy, but many of the men he saw in high honour in the Edinburgh of that day had started as poor. Robertson himself had done so, Dalzell (his Greek Professor) had been far poorer. Scotland has always had sufficient exemplars for its poorest to copy. The trouble in Carlyle was mental and inevitable. At this student time the deadly grip of dyspepsia had not yet fastened on him : physically, if tall and thin, he was wiry and strong, with abundant brown hair and apple-red cheeks. His conversation, like his letters, was admired, and the latter were treasured and preserved by his friends. He was already secretly learning to write literary English, and no steadier industrious reader ever sat in a library.

His life at the University was spent in comfort, in humble lodgings in Simon Square or elsewhere near the University, but in clean ones, with the well-filled monthly box from home to eke out the frugal fare. He never tells us when he learned to smoke, but tobacco was at all times his only expensive habit, though not so much so then as later. Probably while dependent he smoked little. Carlyle was always careful of his money, and from the time, at hand in 1814, when he first began to be self-supporting, he had always sufficient for his every want, always enough to be extremely generous with and to help others.

Young, healthy, with long summer vacation

tramps home to his mother, tramps back to his books, boy student friends, a happy home, and above and beyond all youth and the dreams of youth, Carlyle was fortunate far beyond the average. If ever he was miserable, the fault was in himself. His unconscious ambition prevented contentment, otherwise not even Fate could have given us our Carlyle. He was, however, never grateful. It is one of the few flaws. Now and then he is very ungrateful indeed—to all but his own clan. No remorse for sin unthinkingly committed, no fear of punishment for secret wrongdoing, no bitter reflections over a wasted life and misspent opportunity! Carlyle appears marvellously fortunate, marvellously lonely and great among his fellow-men with genius or without.

In 1815, not in this period, but during one of his discourse-giving, "exegesis" revisits to Edinburgh to keep alive his status as Divinity student—his second, it would appear, and therefore best treated as belonging to this student period—is his first memorable unpropitious meeting with Irving. The scene has been vividly recalled for us by himself, by the same retentive memory which remembered the text of the exegesis: "*Num detur religio naturalis.*" The meeting took place in Waugh his cousin's rooms; Waugh being now medical student at Edinburgh, in Rose Street, the narrow street which lies behind Princes Street—as new then as it is now old and dingy. The time was after Christmas, during the Christmas holiday week, when the Annan school Carlyle was teaching in was closed.

Carlyle was sitting in Waugh's rooms, "not too vigorously conversing, when Waugh's door went

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open and there stept in Irving and one Nichol, a mathematical teacher in Edinburgh." Probably Carlyle had heard a great deal too much about the phenomenal ability and tremendous future of the "victorious bashaw" to be entirely pleased at the sight. One seldom cares as a boy for the exemplar pressed on one by officious friends. Very evidently, too, Carlyle had set himself to allow Irving no opening for a triumph over him. Altogether Irving entered "in questionable shape." Truly enough in a double sense, for an Annan youth by birth, who must have heard of Carlyle as the successor to his own one-time billet of mathematical master, and apparently informed that Carlyle had just left Annan, Irving promptly began to question the dumb, shy youth, who commenced as speedily to give shorter and shorter answers. "How is So-and-so?" and "Has So-and-so another baby?" and so on, went the questioning. "Yes," "I don't know," "I know nothing about them," went the answers. Till at length Irving noted the emphasis and brevity of the answering, and at one particular "*I don't* know," something nettled, and perhaps feeling the atmosphere tense and charged, Irving retorted, "You seem to know nothing." "To which I with prompt emphasis, somewhat provoked, replied, 'Sir, by what right do you try my knowledge in this way? Are you grand inquisitor, or have you authority to question people and cross-question at discretion? I have had no interest to inform myself about the births in Annan, and care not if the process of birth and generation there should cease and determine altogether!' 'A bad example that,' cried Nichol,

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breaking into laughter ; ' that would never do for me, a fellow that needs pupils. ' ”

One can easily imagine the “ loud laughter ” which followed the amazingly Swift-like reply of the retiring and modest but sharp-tongued Carlyle. Not Swift himself could have bettered the retort, and it prepares one for the information that every one who ever listened to Carlyle carried away almost invariably a profound admiration of his abilities and conversational talent.

Irving joined in the laughter, probably marking the speaker mentally as one to be “ watched ” and certainly noting him as an effective speaker. If he felt any resentment he cast it off, and showed none subsequently. Soon the two were on a friendly footing, and Irving's was the first hand outstretched to Carlyle's necessities.

## CHAPTER IV

### SCHOOLMASTERING—ANNAN—KIRKCALDY—IRVING

CHARACTER was rapidly forming during these first Edinburgh student years. The solitude and aloofness, inevitable and unavoidable in the Scots University system, increased the sense of isolation which both creed and home life and parents had fostered in Carlyle. The clan feeling was increased, and not, as it should have been, diminished. Carlyle did *not* make the discovery which the average man makes, that there are other homes and kind fathers and mothers besides his own. The twang of the Pharisee (though candidly the Pharisee in this case at least *was* the superior article) is heard now and then in his acknowledgments of thankfulness for his own parentage and birth dowry.

Pride of intellect is as false as pride of beauty or inherited rank or wealth. Carlyle compared incessantly all through life. Boy and man he drew comparisons. He was always a Calvinist, believing the world divided into elect and non-elect. For the non-elect he had all the contempt and dislike of his Kirk for *its* non-elect, and treated them similarly. In both cases the world has failed to distinguish altogether the truth of the division or to consider man responsible therefor. The same arguments can be brought

against Carlyle's credo as against that he found incredible. If God Himself makes the division between intellect and stupidity, can man be blamed? Any creed which damns the vast majority and saves the few can be of but little real help to the world.

But character was strengthening too at the University. The knowledge that his father could little afford to spend his hard-earned savings on a son of eighteen gave renewed energy to Carlyle. He was determined to end his state of dependence at the first opportunity.

As a matter of fact, Carlyle's father was not greatly impoverished by the extra expense, for, as already said, he was at this very moment moving into what was both socially a higher and pecuniarily a more lucrative mode of livelihood, and was starting farming at Mainhill. Had things gone against him, as they did against the father of Burns, and he had gone backward, a better opportunity would have been given for our observing the full depth of his affection and self-sacrifice. In the mother's case we require no such hypothesis. We know that she would have striven to the death to help her son.

No sooner had Carlyle reached that stage in his progress towards the manse at which longer attendance at the expensive college was not strictly necessary, but could be cheapened by annual appearance there and reciting of a certain number of original theses or exegeses to the Professor of Divinity—in short, whenever Carlyle had reached the stage from which the poorest must in time reach the desired haven, which in fact allowed him to work for his own living, then he promptly snatched the first employment that



offered. He does not appear to have reasoned speciously that his father was not worse off but better, so that in the end the easier course was cheaper. He promptly took the hardest, roughest, but to his parents most helpful, method in his outlook. His character had indeed been formed.

The first opportunity was one which a public advertisement afforded. Annan Academy (his own old school) wanted a mathematical teacher and offered about seventy pounds a year for a satisfactory one. Carlyle saw the advertisement, wrote on the instant to Professor Leslie, his old Professor in Edinburgh, for a testimonial or "letter of recommendation"—and obtained it. Apparently it was very satisfactory. Carlyle was himself an old pupil of the Academy. The Academy knew his character, and, after examination by the headmaster of Dumfries Academy, he was duly preferred to another candidate and obtained the post.

In all this was the usual routine for such cases. Some such appointment was expected by all in the same plight, the poorer aspirants to the "ministry," who could not afford to go to a University and had to earn the wherewithal to do so, or had already been there like Carlyle, but needed funds to carry them farther.

Little wonder the employment failed to satisfy the intensely ambitious Carlyle. There need be little doubt the University had already sown the seeds of scepticism, though the ground in this case was very stony, and a long fight had still to be waged. But in any view the appointment was not attractive. The Manse was a long way off, and he was now eighteen.

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So voluminous are the letters of Carlyle, so well preserved have they been by the recipients, that actually there is in them the clearest, amplest presentment of the "tragedy (and comedy) of a soul" that is to be found in literature. Few writers have been so laid bare to the inmost heart of them. Yet in his own journal Carlyle describes his life as one whose secret lies beyond probing. If so, it has nothing to do with the man the world judges and criticises to-day. It is nothing for which he is responsible. No secret of his life on earth remains, one would say. There may be still more letters, but these can but repeat and emphasise an already ample narrative and features already known.

From the student period on, the Carlyle correspondence has been preserved with a care that is the best possible proof of the admiration and prophetic affection Carlyle had already inspired in all with whom he came in contact. And he was no quick success. Nor did he suddenly leap into fame. Fame was denied him till he was nearly fifty—in reality an old man.

One feature impresses itself strangely. Carlyle never condemns himself. In criticising or judging another he never "puts himself in his place." He never makes allowances for himself, or grants them to others. He is just frequently but unjust as often. Hating schoolmastering, he has pity for himself only, never for the boys. He discusses his teaching as it affects him, not as it affects them. So with other matters. He was inconsiderate of others: in reality selfish, with a peculiar, noble, twisted kind of selfishness. Keen to "get on" and to injure none. He

grants no mercy where his supposed high interests and himself are concerned.

The truth is, Carlyle was an aristocrat and of the blood royal. For his subjects who loyally believed in him he would have sacrificed himself readily, and in due degree he did. For the subjects of others, on the other hand, he has no sympathy. He can be hard as steel to them.

One letter of 1814 deserves to be quoted, not for any characteristic piquancy, but because it throws so clear a light on Carlyle's mind at that period. Its style, like all he wrote before *Sartor Resartus*, is clear, severely grammatical and orderly, quite different from the disrupted "talk" of Sartor, which, as he himself acutely discovered, was but his father's vernacular lifted into English. But style can be disposed of later.

The letter (April 30, 1814) shows a clear-thinking, normal, but gravely serious mind in the young man of eighteen. Witness the solemn allusions (all in the tone and temper of the "man in the street," however) to Napoleon followed by the sardonic quotation from *Don Quixote*: "Strange," says Sancho Panza, "very strange things happen in the boiling of an egg." But not his most ardent disciple could characterise it, or any "juvenile" letter of his, as a letter of great promise or even indicative of literary fame. He proposes an elaborate scheme of correspondence with his friend Mitchell (a future schoolmaster who was then co-aspirant also to the ministry), and it is to be remarked that it is to be mathematical, deliberately so. In 1867, when he willed Craigenputtock to the University of his youth, he still held

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to his opinion that mathematics were the best training for the young mind.

Mitchell had recommended him to read Miss Porter's *Thaddens*, but Carlyle had never found it "in" at the local library. Thereafter the writer passes to Leyden the Border poet, and incidentally amazes us by a criticism which in Carlyle's case seems stupid till we reflect that after all the subject discussed is verse, and Carlyle, who could write such splendid prose poetry, had no ear for verse and the strangest notions of its quality. He quotes a new poem by John Leyden, then but lately dead in distant Java, of which this is the first verse :—

"Shout, Britons, for the battle of Assaye,  
For that was a day  
When we stood in our array  
Like the Lion's might at bay,  
And our battle word was Conquer or Die."

It is poor stuff in reality, and not even Leyden could have been very proud of it, but Carlyle comments thus : "Can anything be grander? What fire! what energy!" Then, alluding to one rather obvious misprint, "From a thousand mouldering mouths of livid flame," he asks, "Is not, think you, this misprinted somehow? Would 'smouldering' do any better?" For so voracious a reader, especially of verse, at which in his early years he unweariedly toiled with the scantiest success, this criticism is not promising. It is the result of an error he never eradicated, that any author of sufficient general talent could write verse if he attended to the rules. Since Scott, and to a greater degree Byron, had set the

literary fashion, Carlyle now and for some dozen years longer wasted an enormous amount of time and brain energy hammering his thoughts into verse. For into verse he had apparently determined to hammer them. Even while corresponding with Miss Welsh he still keeps the belief that he will yet be a poet.

In his *Reminiscences* he alludes gratefully to the kind and hospitable homes open to him at this period, to the helpful clergymen and the teachers and kindly ladies who aided him, however differently he wrote about them elsewhere. The truth is that Carlyle was extremely well liked where he was liked at all, and that he was deservedly fortunate all his life in securing the entrée to the house and homes of ladies and gentlemen far above his ostensible rank in society. In consequence, it follows that his life then in reality could hardly have been as dreary for him as in late years he supposed. Carlyle and Froude (who came so entirely under this late influence in him) persistently transfer a grey monotony of disillusionment from the old man's mind to the young one's. It was inevitable in both, yet their readers ought to allow for it.

Carlyle records that his second year in Annan—1815—"was greatly more endurable." He was living then "at the Reverend Mr. Glen's," and found life "in parts genial and spirited, though the paltry trade and ditto environment" (that of a schoolmaster) "for the most part were always odious to me." Carlyle was never a snob, yet no man had ever more dignified notions as to what he would do or could tolerate doing. He respected his humble parents,

yet he had never the least inclination to a humble, impoverished life for himself. Indeed his discontent, weariness, impatience were but the cravings of ambition for he scarce knew what. In a worldly man critics would term them the impatience of the young for the good things of life, for comfort, respectable position, power, and fame. One other memory he adds, and if his verse criticism disappoints, what of this? "Reading Newton's *Principia* till 3 a.m. and voraciously many other books." Nineteen years old!

So 1815 passed away and 1816 followed. Carlyle strove manfully with his dull pupils, encouraged the quick ones, and did his duty at least for his salary. For the rest he visited in the neighbourhood, revisited Edinburgh now and then as we have seen in order to keep his name "alive" on the Divinity register, and spent frequent week-ends and holidays at Mainhill with his father and mother.

Of his brothers, John had already engaged his affections, or had appealed in some way to his heart and interest more intimately than the nearer brother Alexander, and he had already fixed that John should have a University education also. Perhaps Alexander had declined the opportunity, having already fixed on farming as *his* trade and already applied himself to it. John was to be sent to Annan and Edinburgh as Thomas already had been, but Thomas determined (having now one hundred pounds—or nearly—in his pocket of good well-saved money) that the expense and every other expense he could assist in should not fall on his parents exclusively but on himself, for at least a

share. In this particular of pure and white unselfishness towards parents, brothers and sisters, at least, Carlyle was wholly lovable, admirable, and superbly generous. "My money is the money of all of us, and every one of us is free and entitled and expected to help himself according to his needs." So he seems to write to them, and the unexampled trait was always present in him, now when he first partook of the joys of possession, and at the end when he loaded his niece and others with benefits. Never was such a son! Better brother never breathed!

He has himself related how he came to leave Annan and settle in Kirkcaldy, and the new prospect dawned in the summer of 1816. Irving was moving in easier, more comfortable fashion towards the same goal as Carlyle. He had even preceded him as teacher in the Academy, though always in slightly easier financial personal circumstances. His father and relations were reputable farmers of some status in the humble neighbourhood. Irving was as pious and religious as Carlyle himself, yet without the gravity, sterling honesty, and veracity of the other. He loved the world and popularity and present comfort quite as much as any mission to which he felt called. His better family connection probably had brought him greater opportunities of seeing the world and improving himself than had been offered to Carlyle. Among other well-paid tutorships and schoolmasterships had been one of schoolmaster in Haddington, where he had the notable and tragic fate to become tutor to a Miss Jane Welsh, only daughter of Dr. Welsh, the most popular and ablest physician there, with vitally important consequences,

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not only to himself, but through him to Carlyle. From Haddington he had passed to Kirkcaldy, his fame in his native town of Annan rising higher and higher.

Irving's school in Kirkcaldy had been at first highly successful, so that the local worthies who had invited him from Haddington had been immensely pleased. Latterly, however, complaints had been rife of his unseemly pride in himself, of his ostentation, and finally impatience with, even cruelty to his pupils. So serious were the complaints that many of his former supporters withdrew their children from his care, finding remonstrance so little regarded, and finally came to the resolve to invite another teacher to the town, and so procure different supervision for the education of their children. Whom to select was their first problem.

Naturally they appealed, as before, to the College at Edinburgh, the fountain-head whence these young teachers could be drawn inexhaustibly. The appeal was to Professors Christison and Leslie specifically. Leslie had noted Carlyle, as we have seen, and must have remembered him. Whether Christison had really been so indifferent as Carlyle hints may be doubted, but at any rate Leslie spoke to him, and naturally Christison agreed. The offer and the new appointment were passed on to Carlyle.

The incident suffices to mark the impression left by the young Carlyle on his old University teachers—two years after he had bidden them good-bye. He had impressed them more than his after words lead us to infer, more than he supposed.

It was arranged eventually that Carlyle should



proceed to Kirkcaldy at the end of August 1816, should inspect matters there and accept them if they appeared satisfactory. The Kirkcaldy salary is not stated, but it must have been larger than the Annan one, possibly an hundred pounds. The one curious and dubious feature was the rivalry which seemed inevitable between Irving and himself. Carlyle could take good care of himself in any event, and was in no doubt on that head. How would Irving regard him?

He was not left long in doubt. Irving was likely to be kept well informed of the strategy of the "opposition." He must have been amazed when he heard the name of his selected rival. Vain he was, but he was no Machiavellian. Had he been he could not have taken a wiser and more skilful course than the one he took, trusting to the honour of his countryman and his own charm.

In July Irving came to Annan for his summer holidays, doubtless cogitating the new move and anxious to see Carlyle. They soon met, at a mutual condolence visit to "poor old Adam Hope," Irving's schoolmaster, who had just lost his wife. "If I had been in doubts about his reception of me," wrote Carlyle fifty years later, "after that of Rose Street, he quickly and for ever ended them by a friendliness which in wider scenes might have been called chivalrous." Irving referred point blank to the new arrangement, found Carlyle pledged to visit Kirkcaldy in August, and in the most generous way placed himself and his quarters at Carlyle's disposal. Carlyle was to be his guest. What the "opposition" would think or say does not seem to have concerned Carlyle for a moment. He, and not Irving, had anything to

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lose, but characteristically Carlyle harboured no mean thought. He never did throughout all his long life. Yet we may wonder what the amazed feelings of the "opposition" were when on his first appearance the dubious "new man" and rival appeared hand and glove with Irving! It was certainly calculated to raise suspicion in commercial minds. Now and always Carlyle carried matters with a high hand. So did Irving. But generous as he was, Irving had not the frank honesty so apparent in Carlyle, even in so intricate a coil as this must have appeared to the interested Kirkcaldy bystander. As matter of fact both schools were soon vacant. So, if the "opposition" regarded themselves as "sold," the "conspirators" (if any so considered them) were visibly not one whit the better financially—either of them—by their strange and close agreement.

The Kirkcaldy period has been made very vivid to us by Carlyle himself. As a formative influence it is enormously important, the first outside influence (of environment, other human beings, etc.) that operated on his life so as definitely to change it. At least, notable decisions were reached in this period which influenced all his later life.

The greatest influence was Edward Irving, who of all men conferred on Carlyle his earliest therefore greatest benefits. But for Irving Carlyle's literary career might have been strangled ere it had begun.

Irving's popularity and success in later years procured Irving's triumph. That triumph was no sooner secured than Irving persuaded editors and others to listen to the overtures of Carlyle. Unasked he almost thrust the Bullers (and all *they* were to bring in their

train) upon the not too thankful Carlyle. Through Irving Carlyle met Jane Welsh.

But this is to anticipate. Irving, however, has been harshly treated by Mr. Charles Eliot Norton avowedly in defence of Carlyle. Poor Irving! he had his vanities, insincerities, and weaknesses, he suffered his ignominies and his expulsion from the Kirk of his fathers, he died in gloom. He is even now one of the suspected "quacks" of religion, "founder of a dubious sect," and so on, but he was the best friend ever man was blessed with, as far above his greater friend, for this one virtue of friendship, as that friend was above him in intellectual strength and honesty.

There is little need to describe the life the two men led in their different schools. But they were close, almost inseparable companions, exercising great and healthy influence upon each other. Each possessed what the other lacked.

Carlyle read eagerly and voraciously as ever in the little library Irving had gathered. If the *Principia* was the main acquisition of Annan, no less truly was Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* the potent achievement of Kirkcaldy. It had notable consequence, and in particular (in spite of the presence of Irving, who himself doubtful yet felt no scepticism), Gibbon must have had no small share in inducing Carlyle to accept the trifling omen that followed and definitely reject for the future all thoughts of the Kirk. That he acted wisely as well as honestly is now apparent to every one.

The omen was simply this. From Kirkcaldy he had crossed one day to Edinburgh, meaning to deliver and plead his annual exegesis. The Professor

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was "Not at home," he was told at the door. "Let it be for an omen," said he or thought equivalently. "That ends *that* stage of my career." And it did. He never went back, but returning to Kirkcaldy set himself hardily to the sterner prospect now before him.

It is possible that Carlyle was aided in some slight fashion to this decision by a not unimportant little incident which he relates concerning this period. Among Irving's pupils (or his own) was a certain Miss Margaret Gordon, and she rightly or wrongly occupies the position of Carlyle's first love. That he was her lover and she his, he has himself practically confessed, adding that it might all have come to something had not circumstances been too hard and had not Miss Gordon's aunt, who was her sole guardian, frowned on the unequal and inglorious alliance threatening her niece. No great harm was done, if the least, by the frowning of the "duenna aunt," and although the exact circumstances are utilised as the setting of Teufelsdröckh's romance it is to be remembered that Margaret Gordon could scarcely be the heroine "Blumine" of *Sartor Resartus* without a certain disloyalty to Jane Welsh. Both were then living, and Carlyle's wife was ever keenly and properly jealous. Carlyle loved his wife and had already married her when he wrote *Sartor*. The identification of Margaret Gordon with "Blumine" was natural, but most literary men would agree that an author in Carlyle's circumstances was more likely to employ a composite portrait made up of both Margaret Gordon and his wife than anything else. Still, since Teufelsdröckh was never to marry his

"Blumine," Margaret Gordon fits the case more closely than Jane Welsh, and indeed there need be no doubt she is "Blumine" if any one individual is. Only there is not the slightest warrant for the notion that Carlyle still entertained his old love for her at the time he wrote *Sartor*. It must be remembered he could not invent.

More truly still, however, is "Jane Montagu" (the heroine of *Wotton Reinfred*) indubitably Jane Welsh, just as "Wotton" is Carlyle himself and "Bernard Swayne" his friend Edward Irving. *Wotton Reinfred* was certainly written long after Carlyle had left Kirkcaldy, for he had met no Jane anybody at that time and had not attended Law classes as "Wotton" had and Carlyle did. As certainly it was written before *Sartor Resartus*. In consequence it follows that Carlyle had clean forgotten his love of Margaret Gordon even then, because "Wotton" has an ardent love for "Jane," as passionate as Teufelsdröckh's was not. "Jane Montagu" has her "aunt" also, and much the same circumstances occur as in "Blumine." The phrase "meagre hunger-bitten philosophy" even occurs in it, having evidently charmed its maker.

The sole memorial of this romance so far as the world is concerned, is the fact already cited, and the beautiful, affectionate, marvellously prophetic, keen-sighted and amazing letter of farewell written by Margaret Gordon to her awkward schoolmaster lover. She bids him kindly and loving, but firm farewell, cannot promise to see him again, and begs him warningly to lessen "the awful distance which divides him from his fellows." She recognises his force of intellect and

itself had touched his heart to its tenderest is very apparent from the circumstance he himself tells us that he sat down to write while the impression was still profound and actually delivered himself of his first literary effort in its praise. Not only so, but he thought so highly of it at the time as to send the little essay to some magazine or another in Edinburgh or London. In the scoffing manner of his old age towards all "literary enterprise" of this sort Carlyle dubs his youthful venture in the *Reminiscences* "a flowery sentimental piece." Of its after fate when it reached the magazine he adds that he learned nothing further! It is a common fate.

This was Carlyle's first venture in the world of literature and it failed. A second effort to be mentioned later received no better treatment and shared a similar fate. Not till Irving reached out a helping hand with introductions to editors and others did Carlyle obtain a hearing. Irving, as we shall often have to declare, was a friend indeed.

Not by his own excellence at first was Carlyle fated to succeed. As in cases of family patronage which often brings unworthy people to the front with alarming rapidity only to discover their want of ability, in the end, of course, the man's real character and endowment were the deciding factors. No friendly help, nor the most energetic canvassing father or uncle can keep a man in the place of work and power and reward. Sooner or later each man must stand acknowledged on his own merits, as before God and in reality he stands there always. Irving merely provided the opportunity. Carlyle alone could take it. Yet who knows the roll of the lost, the able and

the brilliant who remain unacknowledged because the helping hand of a friend has never been extended.

The essay may have been "flowery," but more probably the supply of such articles had glutted the demand. In any event, it passed unmourned by Carlyle into the void. Of all men Carlyle was ever the stoutest champion in defence of the nobility of all honest work, and of its ultimate victory over all fancied "economical truths." Of all men he most disdained to regulate his life by "supply and demand." He had the sense to recognise always *that* at least could not be true of literature. It was not literature which came beneath any such law. Carlyle's views as to literature and publishers are somewhat sweeping but always noble. We shall return, however, to this later.

Another holiday ramble through the Trossachs—again in the footsteps of Scott—glows also in Carlyle's pages with the bright animation it recalls. The destination, together with the visit to Yarrow already related, would seem to show that Carlyle passed under the "Scott fever" in his early youth more than his later prejudice against the great man is inclined to admit. The journey in question was made in the company not only of Irving but of Irving's successor, as tutor of Miss Welsh in Haddington, one Brown, who will be alluded to again. It seems to have impressed Carlyle strangely. In connection with it occurs one of the most indubitable instances of his marvellously retentive memory. When writing the account of this tour through the Trossachs in after years, when a lifetime lay between, Carlyle remembers gratefully and admiringly that a Reverend

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Mr. Story of Roseneath, whom the young men visited then, was kind and helpful enough to speak very favourably of "the young man Carlyle" when some months later that reverend gentleman chanced to be in Haddington, and saw and spoke to a certain Miss Welsh there! He had not yet himself met her. Like Napoleon, Carlyle never forgot the good word of a friend, though sometimes he failed to appreciate its value.

During his residence in Kirkcaldy Carlyle enjoyed the passing moment more intensely perhaps than at any other time of his life. There were other excursions and boat adventures on the Firth of Forth, over the waters where, deep down,

"Lies guid Sir Patrick Spens,  
Wi' the Scots lords at his feet."

On one of these the party came very near drowning, having landed on the small island of Inchkeith and delayed their departure till darkness and a strong counter-tide had nearly made an end of them. Carlyle was often "spared," as the pious Scot terms it. He was occasionally miraculously preserved, and his life revealed a sufficient number of such incidents to arouse or strengthen in a mind naturally devout and pious the feeling, or conviction, the strong sustaining faith rather, or belief in a watchful, supervising Personal Providence. Like other men who have shared such a conviction, Carlyle perhaps owed more to it than he ever cared to confess. Its potency is of the greatest, though personal modesty may prevent acknowledgment.

Froude records the fact without illustration, remarking simply that Carlyle "believed in a



Personal Providence," adding, however, "with reason or against." These may be Froude's words or quoted from Carlyle. But that the belief was not held against reason such incidents as these must have gone far to prove. A later incident of the Craigenputtock period comes into the mind in this connection, and although it relates to a time fully ten years later than that we are now discussing it may as well find a place here. Between that lonely farm and Dumfries stretches a long drive of sixteen miles by a steep-banked dangerous road with at times precipitous sides, a deserted moorland road requiring above all careful guidance on a dark night. Carlyle had gone into Dumfries, whither he had been invited as a guest to a dinner held in honour of Allan Cunningham, whom he liked well. The dinner was over, and Carlyle had even proposed the "memory of Burns" at it, when resolutely he made up his mind towards midnight to return to the solitary house where he knew well a wife was uneasily waiting his return. Always most abstemious, he had partaken of the smallest quantity of whisky, though the dinner itself being a rustic one is not likely to have been of the light digestible variety. Harnessing his horse himself, Carlyle set out on his lonely homeward journey. He awoke about six miles from home to discover to his amazement, yet insufficient thankfulness, that he had been sound asleep throughout the entire ten miles of the road already travelled. He owed his life to the intelligence of the stout little horse which had so cunningly threaded out his intricate way home, and to that inscrutable Providence which allots death to so many in parallel circumstances.

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Most readers may be able to add similar chances where the individual preserved was of no greater importance to God or man than a tipsy and genial old farmer of dim and darkened mentality, so that it is perhaps risky to take up the "personal Providence" aspect of Carlyle's thought in a connection Carlyle himself gives no warrant for. Neither he nor Froude mention it as cognate to such experiences, but cognate they may be considered all the same. And indeed these matters are subjective not objective phenomena. They are therefore all the more important in effect. They are in truth the most "real" of all phenomena.

In Kirkcaldy for the first time in Carlyle's life society seems to have been congenial to him. He enjoyed it then as he so seldom did. Besides Margaret Gordon there were other ladies in the Fife town, and their presence made life pass pleasantly. It is plain that this agreeable social life is but one of the many advantages Irving's companionship brought. It was very largely his doing. Carlyle indeed was not always and especially was not as a young man the misanthropic, jaundiced and dyspeptic man hasty observers suppose. In his youth Carlyle had ever a keen eye for a pretty girl. He eagerly frequented the society of such young ladies as he could respect for their intellectual qualities and their sympathy with his ambitions. That many of these admired Carlyle is likely enough, for he was always fascinating in conversation.

We cannot doubt that his own face and figure at this period were well calculated to prove attractive to what he himself denominates the "female mind."

Carlyle possessed a strong and sagacious face, rather high-cheeked yet with a well-modelled nose, a sensitive mouth and resolute chin. The forehead was broad and lofty, while the head was of imposing size and length though mounted on a very slender neck. Brown eyes and hair, which was ill-kempt and luxurious, completed a countenance which even the unobservant usually noted and to which the intelligent always paid special heed. His figure was slender and tall, and Carlyle would have appeared a very handsome man in well-made clothes. But his movements were awkward. He not only scorned the lessons of deportment—few Scotsmen do anything else—he deliberately flouted them. The witty and sarcastic Miss Welsh, whom he was so shortly to meet, made great fun of his uncouth manners, even to his face, as was her pleasing custom at times. Behind his back and in correspondence with her intimates she was incessant all her life.

Author of *Sartor Resartus*, the tailor-patched, and master of the spiritual science of clothes though Carlyle be, he paid scant attention in life to the material clothes he wore. His contempt grew with the years and the acquisition of fame; for, although almost his first act when he at length reached London was to order a new suit of clothes and pay six pounds for them, that was because he was located in Irving's house and was compelled, he may have thought, to dress in keeping with the circumstance. His own inclination did not prompt him.

Until he came in touch with the society of ladies during this Kirkcaldy period it may be questioned whether he had ever taken the trouble to be even

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moderately well-fitted in the important matter of clothes. He scorned the unessentials and he was poor. Miss Welsh sharpened him, but there is reason to believe that the improvement vanished with marriage and hard times. At all events, he wrote once ruefully to his wife on one of her absences, that the coat she had contrived so cunningly out of a dressing-gown was unfit to be seen any longer in the polite society of Rotten Row and he had reluctantly discarded it! Carlyle was then at the height of his fame and was riding daily in the Park amid the rank and fashion of London. No one but he would have ventured such an experiment. Carlyle's authority in the matter of clothes is entirely spiritual, a fact his youthful admirers have often forgotten.

To return to Carlyle's circumstances during this schoolmastering experience, probably the excitement concerning Irving and the new school soon died away. The ardour of the "opposition" may have cooled when they saw the two rivals were inseparable companions. Perhaps they came to see that Irving was not so black as he had been painted. In any event, Carlyle proved no more amenable to their wishes than Irving. He was quite as independent and he was even more contemptuous. If they expected that this second young man from the Borders would be any improvement in this respect on the other they were under a gross delusion. The white waistcoats and heavy gold chains of the pompous were a good deal less than nothing to the poorly paid and therefore preposterously haughty schoolmaster they were intended to awe. Dubious reports were set afloat that Carlyle was no better

than Irving even in the matter of severity and punishment, and there is little reason to think he was, any more than to suppose that either Irving or he were ever intentionally cruel or unjustly severe. Anyhow, the two schools produced no real change in the situation, the plain truth being that neither of the rivals cared a rap for their work, far less had their heart in it.

Nevertheless they were two honest young men and they had no intention to rob the "opposition" and Kirkcaldy of the adequate and effective teacher these were entitled to. For different reasons but actuated by a similar motive both Irving and Carlyle were dissatisfied. Both of them were ambitious, but Irving was more consciously and vulgarly so. He was an enthusiast who desired to make his talent felt in the world, to set it to win applause in the pulpit, to turn him forth a church-filling preacher rather than to exercise all his undoubted capacities for the good of his fellows. Carlyle, on the other hand, desired not alone indeed the good of his fellows as they conceived it but as seemed good to himself, yet he was honestly inspired by the loftiest zeal for truth, by a pure love of truth, and the desire to preach God as he believed Him, altogether a far nobler ambition. Carlyle would have nothing of Fame on any other terms. That is why he soared so high.

In both the young men alike, however, restlessness and dissatisfaction were the outer marks of the inner conflict. Taking counsel together, they resolved to leave Kirkcaldy, kindly sunny and friendly though their brief residence there had been to both. They would cancel their engagements. Both of them again

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very naturally turned their eyes to the attraction for all the ambitious, the Capital—to Edinburgh: Irving if haply he might find there the sphere Kirkcaldy denied, but always as a “minister” of the Kirk; Carlyle, more hopeless by far in outlook, to attend the University as Law student should the legal profession of Advocate prove on more intimate inquiry even distantly practicable, and quite definitely to teach mathematics in the meantime so as to keep body and soul together. He had now completely abandoned all hope of entering the “Ministry,” as his countrymen term it. The Kirk for Carlyle now meant that he could no longer save his soul. It meant a life of hypocrisy, a condition of things inevitable in so honest a character but an unpalatable truth which his native Scotland was slow to forgive. To his eternal honour, Carlyle never paltered with temptation. He never hesitated between Right and Wrong, not even when death and starvation almost grinned at him and distinctions were far from clear. Carlyle was always honest, when he was young as when he was old, when he was poor and obscure as when he was rich and famous. His heart, if any man’s, never knew guile.

Before leaving Kirkcaldy, however, Carlyle felt it his duty to write home to his father and acquaint him with the fateful resolution he had come to, Carlyle’s method of asking his parents’ permission. The father could not but be made uneasy by what he now learned. It was but right he should know, though he must have known also that his son’s determinations were practically unalterable.

It was September 1818 when he wrote home to

his father, and incidentally he mentions that he has some ninety pounds saved to tide him over initial difficulties, while he hoped to find mathematical pupils in Edinburgh to pay his way at the College. He purposed attending the Law classes with a view to qualifying at the Bar.

The old father was a shrewd adviser, but indeed Carlyle was in no need of one. His father believed in him and trusted him fully, as well he might. For answer from home Alexander wrote that his father was "away at market, so was unable to give advice, but thought it might seem necessary to consult Leslie before you gave up." Leslie had appointed him, and the old man had a respect for a Professor we may be very sure the son had not! Alexander heartily agrees with his elder brother's plans, and answering back that brother's own generosity, he significantly adds, "With what assistance we could make and your own industry you would succeed." Was there ever such a family!

In December 1818 Irving and Carlyle removed to Edinburgh. For Carlyle at least the set-back seemed complete and his prospects uninviting in the extreme. But he was the toughest of combatants, while his powers of endurance and industry were wonderful. Carlyle was a magnificent fighter. Somewhere he expresses a doubt as to whether any of us would stay for the dénouement did we realise what was to come. Could Carlyle have realised the full import of all that was to befall him in consequence of the step now so bravely advanced, even his heart of triple brass must have shrunk appalled from the prospect. Had the world possessed any inkling of

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the truth, it must have called out "Madness" on ambitions so high and means of attainment so visionary. But the world has no business there, in the inmost heart of the Hero. Carlyle's ambitions were securely locked in his own breast. As little as any one was he conscious whither they led.



## CHAPTER V

### THE LAW—EMBRYO ADVOCATE—THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

“Mastering the lawless science of our law,  
That codeless myriad of precedent,  
That wilderness of single instances  
Thro’ which a few by wit and fortune led  
May beat a pathway out to wealth and fame.”

*Aylmer's Field.*

It was very naturally to Law Carlyle next turned. As the profession next to Divinity in the old university arrangement of a scholar's existence, and more specially for its highest phase (where pleading is the thing desired), Law appealed to one who had till now hoped to become a preacher. For the ordinary humdrum office work of the solicitor Carlyle had too much impatience and was already spoilt by his life hitherto, free as that had been from “master” or employer. To be a solicitor, the boy must be caught early and chained to the desk young. Office hours and sedentary occupations are not attractive to youth. Poor as he was, Carlyle never considered his problem as one of mere earning of bread and butter. He had little fear; he could always do that. He had the highest notions both of himself and of what he would do or consent to do. He aimed always at the highest.

Consequently, he had never the least notion of becoming a country or town solicitor, a career which stipulates for a long apprenticeship in legal chambers and was otherwise unattractive.

His thought was to become an Advocate, as the Scots term the barrister, therein agreeing with the Romans, French, Germans, Dutch, and other continental peoples rather than with the peculiar usages of England. In Scotland the profession of Advocate is a very close one and was rather more so in Carlyle's day than it is in our own. In general in the olden days it was reserved almost exclusively for the landed and wealthier commercial classes. Examinations are conducted by a Board of Advocates, but the Corporation, or "Faculty" itself, has never relied on brain tests to weed the eligible from the non-elect. The chief barrier has always been the heavy fees exacted from the applicant for admission, fees amounting to some hundreds of pounds, if the library and other requirements are added to the licence which Government demands.

The "Faculty" does not concern us. Carlyle never reached it, but it was always of help and interest to him (whether he recognised it or not) in that it is the proprietor of that magnificent library, ranking third perhaps to those of London and Oxford among the libraries of the world, which is located in Parliament House, Edinburgh, beside the Supreme Courts which Carlyle often attended this winter of 1818-19. To the Advocates' Library while at work on his *Essays* and *Miscellanies* and for the preliminary scaffolding of the *French Revolution* and *Cromwell*, Carlyle was deeply indebted, a debt he

(like most other beneficiaries of the "Faculty's" open kindness) rarely if ever recognised. Yet the "Faculty" bears the weight of the library's maintenance and has gathered it at its own expense, with insignificant Government aid.

Besides the money barrier, an Advocate must pass certain examinations (not stringent even to far stupider people than Carlyle) and pass a year of probation or idleness, earning no money. It is not to be doubted Carlyle could have managed all these requirements, and could not less easily if more slowly have paid the "hundreds" he told his mother were required. The trouble did not lie there.

The trouble lay in the man, such a man as does not often appear to confound the wise and cause the simple to triumph. Would Carlyle's moral principles exist alongside the peculiar Advocate's code he rather unfairly presents in his pages on "Jeffrey" and elsewhere? Probably not, but one cannot go so far as that. They were never put to the strain, for on the intellectual side Carlyle's intellect proved too grandly radical, utilitarian, revolutionary, and above all too impatient of sheer stupidity, ever to tolerate the unspeakable confusions, amendments, and denials of the Feudal Law, the cunning evasions held up authoritatively, mere precision elevated to a *sine qua non*, the solemn nonsense, violent compromises, loosely moral or immoral subterfuges which (inevitable or not) swarm in the uncoded, disorganised, unclassified, undigested mass of law and custom and Court dicta which we call the Law of Scotland. There, and not entirely if at all on the moral side, lay the fatal incompatibility of Scots Law with Thomas Carlyle.

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Had he gone forward and overcome his invincible repugnance, there can be little doubt Carlyle must have taken high rank. Could he have been patient enough to wait (a monstrous assumption), his unwearied industry, his massive intellect, his copious stores of knowledge, his keen, alert, sceptical mind, his oratorical abilities (which later lecturing revealed) must easily have placed Carlyle at last at the front, among those whom a pleasing presence, plangent voice, average brain, knowledge of "human nature," and social influence have placed there ten times more quickly. Carlyle might easily have been a Jeffrey.

He tried, for he has confessed that a good deal later than this he still regarded Jeffrey as a great man, and till his own fame was reached Jeffrey did appear as of some magnitude. At the time such an altitude as Jeffrey had attained satisfied even a Carlyle. Was not the great Walter Scott sitting there at this very time an Advocate and a high official? Scott the Great Unknown (but suspected) Waverley Author? To be an Advocate appeared very desirable.

As a first step, he matriculated again at the University he had left four years before, but this time as a Law student in the classes of Civil or Roman Law, Scots Law, etc., attendance at which has been made compulsory by the "Faculty." The only Law Professor who made any impression on him seems to have been Professor Hume (nephew of the philosopher David), himself an Advocate since the Faculty is Patron of the Chair. Hume's fame is local and professional but respectable. In any event the fault was in Hume's subject rather than in Hume.

Characteristically, however, Carlyle flings neat, clinging mud epithets at the unfortunate teacher as well.

At first Carlyle made progress, wrote to his mother that he thought he would like Law, and attended very regularly. Carlyle's work and especially his *Reminiscences* reveal a considerable smattering of legal lore. He purchased Erskine's *Institutes* and found them naturally and very correctly portentously dull. He soon penetrated the gloss. In a few weeks he had learned the "price" the lawyer pays for leave to earn a livelihood by the practice of Law, and the "price" was far too much of his higher nature for the ambitious, proud, aristocratically-minded Carlyle. As proud a soul had been doomed to him as ever breathed in Czar or Emperor. That he was poor could be got over.

Meanwhile he taught, or gave mathematical lessons to such students as had been referred to him or came to him. Carlyle would not seek them out. His fees were modest. Relating the tale of some mean-minded, envious individual, who coveted education but had not the soul to pay for it, Carlyle casually mentions that "two pounds a month for one hour's tuition per day" were the poor terms he obtained, and below which he would not slave for any one. Carlyle was no "blackleg" to undersell his struggling brother, as many a famous man has been. Money had absolutely no charm for him. For so poor and miserable a fee he toiled as many hours as the long day, his class hours, and modest personal requirements permitted. For so tremendous a worker even as Carlyle, the result was slavery as pitilessly severe as ever was endured by galley slave chained to the oar.

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He was entering the gloomiest period of his long life, to which he never afterwards alluded without a shudder. A fearful, a cheerless, hopeless, terrible time was dawning which was to last over many following years. Little wonder his health broke down. It is now that we first hear of his insomnia, his dyspepsia, and his physical agonies. Some writers, and Professor Nichol among them, have seen fit to be amused at the later manifestations of the diseases then contracted, to question their objectivity, and (most absurdly of all) to censure Carlyle for suffering them! They were real enough. And their cause, the source of it all, was this pitiless, savage, whipping of his poor tired body to this wretched search for bare livelihood while preparing for a professional career.

If he could have thrown it all up (as is always possible for the freeman) he would not have been Carlyle.

From his earliest waking moment he was hard at work, attending classes, tutoring, reading Law volumes voraciously, tutoring again—a heart-rending, monotonous routine. So it began; so for long it continued. Fifteen shillings and twopence he mentions once as his week's bill. Even with the "meal" from home it seems a pittance for a young man of twenty-four, an educated, eager Law student. Spiritual agonies, scepticism, temptation, came to torture him. He suffered dreadfully, and he could not deny that, in one view of it, this was the reward which attached itself to a scrupulous regard for truth and God. Why should he not treat the Kirk as a profession like many another acquaintance and contemporary? Could he not stifle scepticism? Was it

not his plain duty to stifle scepticism on this important matter, as the Kirk said it was? We are supposed to cast scepticism out as an accursed thing. How if we cannot? The morality of the Churches is not as clean and frank as that of the churchless Carlyle.

It was the old, old riddle come home. For him, and (could he but more firmly believe it) simply as one of the Chosen or great ones, had come temptation to try him and the world to betray him. He in his turn was being offered the choice between present almost intolerable misery but eventual victory and present ease, proximate luxury, fame, power, the Manse, and all it implied. Too sick in body and mind to see clearly, he was tormented by self-doubts who was so arrogant among his fellows. His tendency to sarcasm, bitterness, and sneering was increased. But he culled many beautiful flowers too, endurance, and the knowledge of the pure in heart. He was going to be tried in the furnace. He was beginning to enter the darkness, the lights were going out.

It is characteristic of Carlyle almost alone among recorded men, unique among great men, that he should have toiled as ungrudgingly and ceaselessly for his brother's needs as for his own. He saved always: he could not help saving. He had already enough to keep him in sheer idleness possibly two years. Why did he not fall back on the savings? For one thing, the Bar fees loomed in the distance. For another, he had John and John's University education to think of. Though he had but five pounds in the world, so long as he was working and could earn his own subsistence, his brothers, sisters, or parents would have had the whole of it on their mere request. He

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trusted absolutely. He gave absolutely. Within the clan could be no usury, only free gift of all possessed to the needy. That was the lofty creed preached and practised by Thomas Carlyle, aged twenty-four, Law student in Edinburgh. The fact gives us a notion of his towering moral character. How many such could there have been in all the world, especially during these dreadful lean years of national starvation and lack of employment of the first quarter of the nineteenth century? Little wonder the observing Goethe was to hail him in eight short years as "moral influence of far-reaching and incalculable importance." The miracle is that Goethe had so soon been stirred to look in his direction and could see so well.

From her anxious heart and an uneasy home his old mother wrote strengthening but saddening him. Her every letter urged him to God. But she put God as the Bible God, and he knew she urged him to the Kirk. Unwittingly she increased his torment.

We have now reached the purifying years of physical torment, mental agony, and confused bewilderment, the everlasting No, the eternal struggle and Carlyle's share therein.

Pupils were few, and Carlyle was too proud to ask for them. But Carlyle's vigilance and moral discrimination were unabated. He has preserved an ugly story about a Captain Basil Hall. The "gallant captain," it seemed, wanted Carlyle to make certain nautical observations (mathematically beyond the Basil brain), and actually had the audacity to suggest that Carlyle, having received very insignificant wages for doing so, should pass his conclusions to the



captain, who was to deliver them over to the Admiralty as his own and thus attain preferment or walk the quarter-deck with the greatest expedition and personal ease.

The captain was certainly foolish. Not many probably would have entertained the proposal, for it conflicts even with "worldly honour" and the wages were "smallish," but, high or low wages, Carlyle of all men was the last to suggest it to. Carlyle rightly dubs him "little wretch" and scornfully refused, needful as the little sum must have appeared which was offered in compensation.

Carlyle was a great deal prouder than any Rhodes or Carnegie, and abundantly particular *how* he made his money. Unhappily, one obtains an ugly impression (Carlyle being totally silent) as to what Basil's friend Irving thought of the tempting bait, a notion even that Irving was not vocally or indignantly hostile, perhaps smiled indulgently though he himself would certainly refuse also or forfeit Carlyle's friendship. All this was discussed in Irving's rooms in Bristo Street, Edinburgh (rather grander than Carlyle's own) during the winter 1818-19. "Where is it now?" as he pathetically asks of so many of his recollections.

Through the friendship with Irving, acquaintances and hospitable homes, even though in strictly limited number, would not be wanting. But Carlyle was curiously hard to please, demanding for one thing intellect as well as morality in such acquaintances as he became intimate with. Fortunately, he found as yet no attraction, and therefore no temptation, in the luxuries and pleasant "extras" of existence—large,

well-furnished houses, fashionable homes, Society (with the capital S.), or with athletics, games, sport, and the hundred "beguilers of youth." He never mentions entering a theatre till he heard Talma in Paris. There was a theatre in Edinburgh, certainly, in which Mrs. Siddons was to appear, but it is well known that to the Kirk for which Carlyle had been brought up, in whose shadow all his life hitherto had been spent, the drama and the stage were alike an undoubted device and wile of the devil. Anathema against the Stage runs in lurid threatening letters across the Story of the Kirk. There need be no doubt Carlyle shared this contemptuous and extremely fervent religious antipathy to the theatre in his student years, though emancipation was close at hand. At no time did theatre-going figure among his expenses, and there was another temptation the less. Memories must still have lingered in Edinburgh of the bitter Assembly squabble between the timid apologists of the Reverend John Home, author of *Douglas* (the "Whar's yer Wullie Shakespeare noo?" play of Scottish idolatry), who had been challenged with having committed the appalling sin of writing a popular play and had stood trial in consequence, escaping only by some ridiculous and morally contemptible subterfuge or another.

From Kirkcaldy Carlyle had written, "Certainly *Waverley* and *Mannering* and the *Black Dwarf* were never written by the same person." In Edinburgh he was now paying more attention to literature, magazine-writing appearing as a likely and profitable employment once he could find a footing. As the Kirk faded, literature grew clearer. In these years

Carlyle would learn that literary criticism, especially his own, was not infallible, and he must often have regarded Scott's face and lofty peak forehead trying to read the Waverley Novels into it. Among the duties of the embryo Advocate is an attendance at the Courts, listening to pleaders, watching the actual conduct of a lawsuit and acquiring fragments of legal wisdom, and Carlyle was often in the Courts doing so, in the winter and summer of 1819 particularly. Scott and Jeffrey were both to be seen there at that time, and already, as by premonition, these were the two that attracted him rather than the wise Judges on the bench and the successful gownsmen.

Professor Leslie was always a good friend. He was now able to be of active use and benefit to Carlyle, not only in the usual professional way of recommending him to inquiring persons in search of a tutor, but as unclassified home assistant in his own work, now that of Natural Philosophy rather than Mathematics. "Upon the whole," said Leslie to him in December 1818, "I see nothing so eligible for you as to learn the engineer business, and then go to America." The Professor had just heard of some successful old pupil who had done so, but he little suspected the literary dreamings of his young scholar. This was on Carlyle's first call upon him. Carlyle had other irons in the fire.

From his kind friend Dr. Duncan, minister of Ruthwell, he had brought a letter of introduction to Dr. Brewster, later the famous Sir David Brewster, who was yet to be Principal of Edinburgh University and as such to install his old-time visitor as Lord Rector. Such is the romance of Destiny! Carlyle

was kindly received. Brewster took his address, but said nothing at first about Carlyle's writing for the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, to the editorship of which Brewster had been appointed in 1808. Naturally he wanted to observe the applicant further before committing himself to assist him.

That he did so, and for a busy, rather neglected man did surprisingly more than most such would do in the case of a new volunteering contributor, is certain.

In February of the very next year, 1819, we find Carlyle accepted as contributor to the *Encyclopædia* and hard at work. "Madame de Staël" seems to have been the first of these articles to engage his attention. Through Leslie also Carlyle was afforded a peep at the Royal Society, of which Brewster was President, but he was not impressed. This winter of 1819 was a very dreadful winter of unspeakable misery, starvation, want of work, riots and threatened risings all over Britain, and he has related how (in spite of their own sympathies and associations with the cause of law and order) he and Irving and other warm-hearted, thinking young men were privately "radical" enough to feel an intense, but apparently smothered, sympathy with the outcast miserable creatures who (they were told) required holding down with the musket and the bayonet.

Irving meanwhile had gone to Glasgow, having been appointed to the enviable and much-sought-after post of assistant to Dr. Chalmers, the great Scottish preacher there. The heavy loss his removal thither meant to Carlyle had been minimised by a close correspondence, and by Carlyle spending brief winter or other holidays with Irving in Glasgow

as his guest. Carlyle had already ceased to take further interest in the Law class, or indeed in Law at all, and had discerned (discernment becoming monthly clearer and clearer) that he at least could not pay the "price" required to earn a living by its aid. With the result that literature more and more clearly was becoming, not only the most promising prospect for him but the only apparent refuge.

The carrier still went to and fro between Ecclefechan and Edinburgh carrying Carlyle's boxes and letters or bringing well-stocked hampers and carrying back the "washing" of the month, all just as five years before. Progress had been backward, Carlyle must have thought bitterly. In summer he went down as usual, in the old way, to his home when he was free, though the Law class kept him for one summer at least, the "Faculty" of Law in the University condescending to summer sessions.

His father had removed to Mainhill, and in the summer of 1819 Carlyle went as usual to his father and mother there. Like all others in Scotland, the elder Carlyles were suffering from the dearth of all things, food and money alike, and though they were frugal and thrifty beyond the average (so that they did not suffer intensely, as the less provident did) the clay soil of Mainhill was not productive and they had not been very successful in the farm. Altogether it was the very worst possible time for the sick and ailing son to come home with his poor story of lack of chances and his hopeless feeling. The old folk, and many thousands like them in Scotland during that summer, had enough to think of without having any extra burden thrust upon them. But this extra

burden was well worth it, and they knew it in their dim, trusting way. His mother never glanced at failure. That meant nothing to her loving mind if only she had her darling son well—and reconciled to the Kirk. That was the aspect which made *her* most anxious, and yet even she must have thought it strange so good a son, with so passionate a love of truth, had to go outside the Kirk to find it.

The father never complained, never uttered a word revealing disappointment. The son had returned and did not know very well what was to become of himself, he had given up the "Ministry" and its chances, but his father, though uneasy, had and showed a faith and belief in the son, as creditable as it was trusting. "A word from him," said the son later, "would have closed his doors for me, but it was never uttered." Carlyle's pride was so high and strong, he must have walked out of the house into the wilderness at that word.

It was the most miserable summer of Carlyle's life, and it is apparent its memory was gloomy and bitter. Mental confusion and religious doubt added to the discord. Bad health and dyspepsia imparted acute torment.

His parents acted nobly and sensibly and he endured it, and eventually came out four or five years later infinitely the stronger and better for it. The marvel is, however, that his pride suffered no diminution whatever. He might have become gentler and kindlier to other sufferers, but valuable as that lesson would have been, he never learned it. He learned, that is acquired, indeed very little; rather does Carlyle appear some amazing phenomenon of de-

velopment along the sure and definite lines of heredity and personal bias.

His life is not the life of a man who aimed high, struggled hard and succeeded. It is that of one who aimed alone at the highest, had a proportionate and unparalleled struggle, but reached it. From any lower point of view than this (ill-health being excluded) there was nothing very hopeless about his position. Not every young man in Scotland in the summer of 1819 could boast that he had been permitted to contribute to the *Encyclopædia*, or knew that he had only to consent to it to become an engineer, go abroad and find his opportunity. His moral reputation was almost super-excellent: he had industry and he was almost certain he had high literary skill. Had it not been for the dyspepsia, there was no real cause for gloom at all. Burns had been skulking the countryside in the lowest depth of poverty and personal abasement at the very moment his poems were published and entered on the book of Fame. We need not question that the mental conflict of doubt and scepticism in Carlyle caused him unusual agony since it was endured in conjunction with physical tortures.

But although the retrospect of this gloomy Mainhill summer appeared so dark and terrible, there need be little doubt Carlyle was not altogether abnormal. The great danger of the Carlyle biographer is that he deepens the gloom far beyond the actuality. One knows very well that human beings (women especially, but not infrequently men) can and do suffer mentally and morally without becoming a nuisance and "wet blanket" to

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their neighbours, suffer frequently outside the knowledge of their everyday companions and suffer in silence. Carlyle did not complain very much in these young days, but he became very vocal about them in late life. His letters indicate both that he suffered and that he was almost as silent as he could be at the actual moment of endurance.

In Edinburgh at any rate he had hard work, and work of the most harassing, monotonous description. The world seems hard indeed to put our Carlyles to teaching mathematics, and maybe he thought that himself when he talked of its putting Burns to gauge ale barrels. If the world be to blame—it has for excuse—blank ignorance. It is stupid and wasteful.

When he was very fatigued, possibly too when even to his enduring soul came the necessity for human companionship, he had Irving at least to console and encourage him. He never forgot Irving, and well he might not. He used to go to Glasgow, and there heard from Irving and Chalmers, but more effectively saw with his own eyes and studied the riotous weavers who were so great a dread then to the prosperous. Later he found his observations very useful in his *Chartism* and other papers and in the *French Revolution*. Evidently the two young men thought much in common, but they were always discreet. Carlyle had always far too much tendency to Absolutism in thought, too much reverence for Strength as exemplified in the forces of law and order, and far too keen a hatred of anarchy to allow Radicalism much sway in his mind. Already he had learned there can be no real



strength without wisdom, and he suspected that wisdom was greatly to seek in the political welter of the pre-Reform era. Like all observers then he prophesied revolution, because he expected it. But revolution never came. Carlyle was generally expecting revolution, and it is clear that no more than any other observer did he consider all the factors of the equation. Perhaps he left out God.

Irving always cheered him, one fancies. The two still kept up their long walks. Two of these belonging to this period were very memorable to Carlyle and have their place in his biography. One of them has been preserved for us in beautiful prose poetry, that of the walk among the moss-hags of Drumclog, where the keen eye of Carlyle noted concerning the topographical situation, swampy and treacherous, "Clearly a good place for Cameronian preaching and dangerously difficult for Claverse and horse soldiery if the 'suffering remnant' had a few old muskets among them!" So sure an eye has Carlyle for the localities of military strategy that again and again a wild notion rises in his reader that Carlyle might under other conditions have been a great soldier and general.

The *raison-d'être* of the walk by Drumclog was this. Carlyle was leaving Glasgow for Mainhill and home, and the good Irving was convoying him as far as he could on the way. When they came to part—but the picture must be painted with Carlyle's own matchless words:—

"At length the declining sun said plainly 'You must part.' We sauntered slowly into the Glasgow Muirkirk highway. Masons were building at a

wayside cottage hard by, or were packing up on ceasing for the day. We leant our backs to a dry stone fence ('stone-dike,' dry stone wall, very common in that country) and looking into the western radiance continued in talk yet awhile, both of us loth to go. It was just here, as the sun was sinking, Irving actually drew from me by degrees in the softest manner, the confession that I did not think as he of the Christian religion, that it was vain for me to expect I ever could or should."

The Scots are notorious for the intermingling of "shalls" and "wills." "Would" perhaps should be the closing word. Carlyle had no determination not to believe in his mother's creed. He would have given the world to do so.

The other walk was far more fateful. So fateful indeed is it that the strange sad figure of Irving appears as almost the necessary forerunner of Carlyle's. It is as though Carlyle were doomed to rise on Irving's fallen body. But that aspect must present itself later. Meanwhile, in June 1821, Irving suggested to Carlyle a walk out from Edinburgh to Haddington, where Irving had already been school-master and could promise to introduce him to some interesting and hospitable people. Irving did *not* inform Carlyle (there was of course no deceit in the matter) that the real object of *his* visit to Haddington was to see again his little pupil of past years, Miss Jane Welsh, whom to his own confusion and consequent distress he had discovered he loved a great deal too well and non-wisely, since after leaving her he had become engaged to a Miss Martin, daughter of the parish minister of Kirkcaldy, and was not

really a free agent. The love was returned, but accompanied by the strictly honourable ultimatum that Irving must first be free from his Kirkcaldy engagement before he could appear or be accepted as Miss Welsh's lover. That gained he had every reason to know he would be accepted in marriage. Perhaps Irving wished to whisper dawning hopes of freedom, perhaps he desired to make what amends he could, the point is of no importance save only for this fact that Carlyle knew nothing of any love affair between the two and that, not being experienced in such matters, he saw nothing even to suggest such a notion. Yet from this year and for some little time Irving stood between Carlyle and Miss Welsh, though in a dim unhappy way, and when we find, as we soon shall, Carlyle falling rapidly in love with the young lady he was now meeting for the first time, we are to remember she was not in love with him and could not well be.

The walk from Edinburgh to Haddington was made to include Athelstaneford, of interest to both, not because of Saxon traditions but from its literary associations. It had been the parish whereof the Reverend John Home already alluded to was minister, at which he wrote his once famous tragedy *Douglas* (with its "My name is Norval! On the Grampian Hills my father feeds his flock"), which ranted out in the old manner on the stage had occasioned great adulation, and created a furore of popularity and much woe for its author. "Whom secretly I had no respect for," adds Carlyle, showing that he had advanced in critical taste since the "Battle of Assaye" period. Carlyle was much more interested

in "old Skirring's" grave in the kirkyard there, "author of the doggerel ballad on Preston Pans Battle," Adam Skirving, author of "Johnny Cope." Carlyle knew much out-of-the way history as this little fact, and his recollections of the Belfast Ballad of poor Tom Smail, prove: he knew a great deal about ballads and chap-books as well as about *Principias* of Newton—truly a voracious reader!

More memorable walk in the life of any man than the walk to see the woman of his own heart's choosing there cannot be. Such was this walk to Carlyle. "We walked and talked," he writes, "a good sixteen miles, in the sunny summer afternoon. The end of the journey and what I saw there will be memorable to me while life or thought endures. I was supremely dyspeptic and out of health those three or four days, and they were the beginning of a new life to me." Many years, however, were to pass over them both before Thomas Carlyle married Jane Welsh.

For the present she did little more than rouse his keen interest. One further picture called up by that famous and eventful walk may be given. It is very "human."

"We were now in our double-bedded room, George Inn, Haddington, stripping, or perhaps each already in his bed, when Irving jocosely said to me, 'What would you take to marry Miss Augusta now?' Her they had just met that day, the daughter of the minister. 'Not for an entire and perfect chrysolite the size of this terraqueous globe,' answered I at once; with hearty laughter from Irving. 'And what would you take to marry Miss

Jeannie, think you?' 'Hah! I should not be hard to deal with there, I should imagine!' Upon which another bit of laugh from Irving, and we composedly went to sleep."

Carlyle had definitely given up all notion of becoming an Advocate. By 1821 he had become more and more convinced that literature would prove his refuge in the end. Brewster had at least given him some slight opportunity of trying his powers, and the contributions he made to the *Encyclopædia* occupied a good deal of his time in the year 1820, and the two following years. From first to last he seems to have contributed some sixteen biographical criticisms to that compilation, taking up, studying, and most thoroughly and diligently preparing for writing about (sometimes as his letters home show with the scantiest materials obtainable) Lady Mary Montague, Montaigne, Montesquieu, Montfacon, Dr. Moore, Necker, Nelson, the Netherlands, Newfoundland, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Mungo Park, Lord Chatham, and William Pitt. He was a patient reader, contenting himself with nothing else than all the information he could obtain access to, as preparation for discussion in all his more important books, his *French Revolution*, *Cromwell*, and *Frederick*. While it would be absurd to suppose he took such trouble for this ~~hack~~ work, where it was neither necessary nor to be expected, there can be no doubt he was far more careful, painstaking, and accurate than the ordinary unfortunate who undertakes drudgery of this character.

The little biographies, etc., are wonderfully com-

pact, solid sensible pieces of work, entirely unoriginal, bearing no distinctive marks. When he wrote them Carlyle had not "come into his own," nor had he lighted upon the expressive and disciplined "style" he was to startle (and at first irritate) the world with in *Sartor* and other work. The judgments passed in these *Encyclopædia* contributions are the current orthodox judgments of the day, well written and blameless. But they are scarcely Carlyle's. His heart was not yet in his work, any more than in schoolmastering. Or rather he had not yet found his creed.

Their existence shows us one important fact, that our Carlyle—the Carlyle of history—had not yet been born. He had not yet "found himself." He was in birth process as it were, his mind forming as really and truly as the body had been slowly fashioned in the mystery and miracle of its beginnings.

Carlyle could have written nothing at this period worthy of himself. Not one year of his existence indeed could have been omitted from the long years of preparation. He was not ready; he was not yet "made" in the form and fashion of the Carlyle we know.

Everything written before the time of second birth or full birth, including even the *Life of Schiller*, is different from *Sartor* and the subsequent works. The *Miscellanies* are among the finest of his productions, and they with *Sartor*—by far the most brilliant and original work Carlyle ever accomplished—represent the birth of Artemis Carlyle—Carlyle newly sprung from the forehead of Time,

the first glorious appearance shining like Sirius among the other stars of intellect. The difference is—Carlyle.

With each step we draw nearer this new birth, and each succeeding publication marks our nearer approach. These encyclopædic articles are just as though the splendid intellect of Carlyle was at work, but Carlyle—our Carlyle—had not taken command. They are comparatively uninteresting to the Carlyle reader.

We learn from Carlyle himself that his second attempt, unaided and utterly unknown, to persuade an unknown editor to publish an article occurred at this time, and that it proved once more unsuccessful. This was an affair of the winter of 1820, "the coldest winter I ever knew." Doubtless he had resolved on a further literary experiment to try his powers and very naturally. Jeffrey (known to be editor at this time of the *Edinburgh Review*) appeared to be as likely a person as any to make experiment with. Probably Carlyle's private opinion of the *Edinburgh Review* was that it was the best of the magazines then extant. He was not likely to have considered in the least its suitability to his requirements.

It was a bold stroke for the Carlyle of that period, and only too probably (from his own description of its German-baron-table-jumping humour) the lost essay is of little consequence. He writes on January 26, 1820, to his brother John: "For some time back I have been employed a part of each night in writing a paper for the *Edinburgh Review*. I at last gave it in last Monday—in a letter to

Francis Jeffrey, Esq. — desiring him to send it back if it did not suit the purpose. I have yet got no answer. Indeed I should not be surprised if it were not accepted: it was written on a very dry subject: and I was not at the time in my happiest vein for writing well." Fifty-six years later this marvellous memory can give us a very much fuller account to the last detail of all that transpired. The oftener we compare Carlyle's memory with his own far-back contemporary letters the more does his exactness and accuracy, as Froude points out, surprise us.

"Well do I remember those dreary evenings in Bristo Street: oh what ghastly passages and dismal successive spasms at 'literary enterprise.' My *Review of Pictet* all fairly written, but in George Dalgleish's good clerk hand, I penned some brief polite note to the great editor, and walked off with the small parcel one night to his address in George Street. I very well remember leaving it with his valet there, and disappearing in the night with various thoughts and doubts! My hopes had never risen high, or in fact risen at all; but for a fortnight or so they did not quite die out; and then it was in absolute zero: no answer, no return of MS., absolutely no notice taken, which was a form of catastrophe more complete than even I had anticipated."

Perhaps had he called to request the return of the parcel he would have found that the "great man" had either never opened it or had opened it and was waiting for the man who left it to take it away. But the mention of George Dalgleish's "good clerk hand" shows that he was not keenly anxious to be identified



as the author. Froude says his own writing was beautifully clear in younger days. The "literary enterprise" was apparently a review or skit (portentously jocular doubtless) on some "foolish mechanical theory of gravitation elaborately worked out by a late foolish M. Pictet in Geneva."

Till he came into his own Carlyle clearly was not likely to prove a successful literary man. He was not a ready writer. He grumbled tremendously (and with some reason for at least part of it) at the painful preparation Fate *forced* upon him. But had he not been forced to the furnace he had never been purified and had never been Carlyle. One begins to understand the uneasiness and self-doubts of Carlyle, whether or not success awaited him if he accepted literature as a profession. As a matter of fact none who read his earliest literary work dare have said that a "future" awaited him. His own heart whispered the contrary, little more. But it was a stout heart, and Carlyle realised something was at work within which would make all the difference.

Circumstances, environment, outside aid and influences account for no man. We can but detect such and such influences combining, changing, developing. These are to the man what the brain is—indispensable material. But the mystery is not *there*, the Something, forming, becoming, fermenting, at work behind them all. The soul of a Napoleon reincarnated, if that can be imagined, and ushered into the world a century later would not find the world the same, and therefore could not give us the same result as it did in the earlier amazing period.

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No mention has yet been made of an exceedingly acute, and immensely beneficial and productive resolve and determination of Carlyle made in this period. We cannot readily figure our Carlyle without a knowledge of German, nor conceive him the same Carlyle without it. Goethe is the master influence of Carlyle, wielding perhaps greater power in that proudly independent domain than any other man or hero ever did.

We should very much like to know who counselled Carlyle to read German and told him that "he should find what he wanted there," for as a pious old divine would have said, the finger of Providence (that is the Absolute Need and necessity for German thought as a factor in the development of Carlyle) is clear enough. In the same old fashion of speech the man who introduced Carlyle to Goethe and German literature was the instrument of God. Carlyle must have felt it so.

Yet it would appear as though no man, no remembered influence, no visible agency whispered the momentous need or where it could be satisfied. At least there seems no acknowledgment of debt to any one, and the case resembles others where a man suddenly takes up the study of a certain science (for no reason that he can give, and impelled thereto by a power within him as secret as it is irresistible) studies the science and becomes its most brilliant expositor.

No more useful accomplishment, none more helpful to himself, was ever made by Carlyle. He seems to have had a "gift for languages," and at different times is found reading and mastering German, French,

Italian, and Spanish. Few Germans probably have ever read so much German literature as Carlyle did, all untranslated into English then and unknown to Carlyle's British countrymen. Coleridge was the only influential German scholar of the time in England, but there is no evidence that Carlyle was drawn to study German through the influence of Coleridge.

It was as a translator and interpreter of Goethe, Schiller, and others that Carlyle first appeared in the literary world. Not only did his great and latterly supreme knowledge of German and German authors operate wonderfully as a practical influence in himself at this critical period, but in some all-important mysterious fashion it pointed out to him the spiritual way to realise himself. Incidentally too, but quite as beneficially in its lower sphere, the knowledge of, and ability to interpret, German authors supplied him with the indispensable something which was to distinguish him from the rest of the rising authors of the day. They gave him his chance. When Irving introduced him to the editors, Carlyle could now propose something to them no one else had done; something they saw "money in," to use the language of "trade," and at first were eager to publish, at least to make experiment with. For it must be remembered Carlyle fulfilled a certain demand for German literature that then existed.

No man has ever written more nobly, sarcastically and indignantly pleading for the supremacy of morality in political and all other economies. But there is more than morality. Trade is trade, and even the most Heaven-gifted author, if he live by his books, must sell them and bargain for them. Trade has its

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laws and rightly so. Not even a Carlyle can ignore them. No man, however, more honourably held out till the laws of trade operated without the slightest loss of morality. For this he is for ever honoured : for this he is ever the hope and help of youth. The importance of Carlyle's knowledge of German is notable.

Carlyle learned to read German during these memorable Mainhill summers of 1819-21, and he plunged with avidity, like a returning fish to friendly waters, into the Teutonic sea.

## CHAPTER VI

### LEITH WALK (RUE DE L'ENFER), JUNE 1821— THE CENTRE OF INDIFFERENCE

THE year 1821 is one of the most important and memorable in the life of Carlyle. "Revival" religious meetings have made us familiar with certain phenomena, half spiritual, half physical, known to the religious sects themselves as "conversion," phenomena naturally made much of by the believers. Occurring, however, in batches of hundreds at a time, in simultaneous conversion of a multitude, the phenomena are more than dubious. Whatever conversion really mean in that case, in its genuine character the phenomenon is interpreted ordinarily as a similar incident to that known to all the world as the "conversion of St. Paul," unaccompanied by what is called the supernatural.

Whether or not anything can be supernatural, it is an admitted fact that a person under such severe physical strain as that induced by painful and laborious thinking on matters of the supremest personal moment (involving to the mind of the thinker his eternal welfare) often experiences the most sudden relief at a given period as though a physical strain had instantly been removed.

A great sense of Peace ensues. The mental

inspired that Carlyle's letters were preserved. The recipients treasured them.

He was burning the candle at both ends, and it stood to be consumed quickly. But the rate of consumption was vastly increased by the special circumstances. A Carlyle light-hearted and full of hope would have suffered, but Carlyle was all these years in the blackest despondency even he ever experienced. The pain resulting from religious struggle within reduced his resisting powers enormously. In this particular Carlyle's distinguishing characteristic of sincerity handicapped him gravely.

We have already stated that even as a schoolboy he lived ever in his Taskmaster's eye. He was no loose thinker. In his young days he came near being in some ways a precisian, gravely serious, thoughtful far beyond his years, even beyond his calling, or the calling he had once professed. The gravity of the boy had deepened, but, unfortunately for his own peace of mind and fortunately for the world's Carlyle, the creed and belief on which the gravity rested had suffered dangerous shocks. Carlyle had possessed the firmest and most lively faith in the existence of God as revealed in the Bible throughout all his early years. Probably, like other men, at no time was he ever greatly harassed by doubt of the existence of God; he shows no sign of ever having been atheistic or materialistic. But he had discovered, so far as he was concerned, the scepticism as to Revelation which he had confessed to Irving. As Froude puts a like state of things: "Thus, saith the Lord." "Yes, but how if you know no better than I that it really is the Lord?" With Carlyle's advent into the

University had stepped in Philosophy and Literature, offering only mere confusion. At the best they proved a God, but not the God of the Bible. His whole mental nature was shaken to its foundations.

At first the negative aspect forced itself most effectively. Inevitably so, for first in order of time comes the doubt of the accepted. That increases and increases till either the old faith or the new doubt is established. If the old, the thinker is as he was, and goes on rejoicing; if the doubt, then further progress must end in atheism or giving up of all hope of creed and explanation (simply not possible to Carlyle); or it will reach a point where it is arrested. New thoughts, solutions, substitutes, suggest themselves to arrest the doubt, and the thinker starts (almost unconsciously at first) to formulate his new creed. This moment of arrestment when first scepticism is defied is what, in his Teufelsdröckh way of putting his own struggle, Carlyle calls the Centre of Indifference—which it most truly is.

*Sartor Resartus* is the story of how Carlyle found his creed, the record of his mental labour, his explanation of his marvellous new birth. It is written white hot from the heart and brain quivering with the momentous excitement of the real struggle of which it is the literary transcript.

“ Full of such humour, and perhaps the miserablest man in the whole (Scottish) capital or suburbs, was I one sultry Dog day after much perambulation, toiling along the dirty little Leith Walk among rubbish enough, in a close atmosphere and over pavements hot as Nebuchadnezzar’s Furnace; whereby doubtless my spirits were little cheered, when all at once there

arose a Thought in me and I asked myself: 'What art thou afraid of? Wherefore like a coward dost thou for ever pip and whimper and go cowering and trembling? Despicable Biped! what is the sum-total of the worst that lies before thee? Death? Well, Death: and say the Pangs of Tophet too, and all that the Devil and man may, will, or can do against thee! Hast thou not a heart? Can'st thou not suffer whatsoever it be: and as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet while it consumes thee? Let it come, then: I will meet it and defy it.' And as I so thought there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul: and I shook base Fear away from me for ever."

Two slight changes have been made in the above excerpt from *Sartor*. The name of Teufelsdröckh's city has been changed from a French one to Carlyle's own city, which was Edinburgh, and the name of the Rue Saint Thomas de l'enfer has given place to the name of the street wherein, as matter of fact, according to his own account, the incident actually occurred. Carlyle's memory is always entirely reliable. He himself has stated that the thought above expressed—the thunder of defiance—seemed to possess him so instantaneously, vividly, and even projected into a sort of reality in space, that he knew the very spot, the exact position his body occupied in the street of the city at the moment he first became startingly aware of it.

Ordinary minds simply cannot conceive what actually happened, and to the man who never suffered from religious doubt, and probably never had a possessing thought in his mind, the vividness



of the scene must appear fanciful. It was far from that to Carlyle. He had suffered tortures, and the tie or bond between mother and son was in Carlyle's case so intimately strong, peculiar and rare, that the agony to Carlyle caused by the knowledge that his nature, creed, soul, had become alien to those of his mother, must have been overpowering. Eternity was a reality to Carlyle. His mother was the one person who was literally himself, or, in Lamb's noble words concerning Coleridge, "the proof and touchstone of all his cogitations." As things were, the dread of Eternal separation from her weighed on him like a nightmare.

In its simplest elements this was the struggle of Carlyle. In the real struggle the contest ranged over all the vast world of thought, in the great intellect he possessed, and revealed itself in Protean shapes. Yet he reached the crisis in that perambulation down Leith Walk. He was staying in Moray Street, Edinburgh, at the time, and was accustomed to walk down the long slope to the sea for the purpose of bathing. The month, he says, was June, and in Scotland the month of June is not inviting for open-air bathing to any but the robust. Carlyle, physically, was no weakling, for all the outcries he makes. But he must have been highly strung at that moment of the hot June day when he underwent "Baphometric fire baptism."

It is to be feared Carlyle is too much regarded as a strange Jeremiah, wandering dyspeptically, engaged always in discussions of Man's destiny in Heaven and Hell, and his vivid reminiscences are to blame as much as anything else.

He confesses, however, even in 1832, that he has inherited from his father a tendency to exaggeration. *Sartor* is a reflection of Carlyle at white heat, and allowance must be made for his tendency.

Indeed he has converted the struggle into such wonderful literature, that he is carried away by sheer rhetoric and the grandeur of his thought. In reading his life, then, the reader must dissociate Teufelsdröckh from Carlyle quite as often as he identifies the two. He must remember Carlyle is a supreme artist in this matter of transference into literature, that in dealing with his own case he is still the artist.

To come back to "real life" again after such an incident, the reader must try to figure the real Carlyle on his way to his dip in the sea, tired, uncouthly dressed, rustic. He was not Teufelsdröckh. He was a very humble student, late of law, now a sort of secretary-assistant to Brewster and Leslie, whom both of these men would like to see decently established in a way of livelihood, since they admired his pluck and honesty. He was not even a Divinity or Law Student now, and he was twenty-six, keenly alive to the fact that his life companions were all passing him, getting established in the world, in country manses and town mansions. Little wonder he felt miserable. Only his own pride told him he was their superior. What if *they* were in the right of it? The Thomas Carlyle, Lord Rector, was as yet (in his own marvellous language) "slumbering in the womb of time." No least notion could have occupied the mind of the lonely student as to the celebrity this defiance of his in Leith Walk was one day to possess.

He tells us he did feel an all-pervading sense of relief, as though a real, down-pressing weight had been lifted. He had passed a milestone, or rather he had reached the watershed.

June 1821 was possibly the most fateful, important month in his long life. His mental development attained the centre of indifference, and Carlyle met Jane Welsh in one and the same month. It was a strange coincidence that as he definitely left behind him all hope of guiding his life as hitherto he had hoped, walking by the old creed of his fathers, and had entered on a new existence, leading he knew not where, he met also the woman who was to be one of the great influences of the coming time, "who unweariedly aided him in all of good or worthy that he ever did or attempted."

In another of the many happy walks with Irving, when Irving (as he often did) came to see Carlyle instead of Carlyle going to Glasgow and Irving, the pair walked into the Lothians, and Carlyle had a long conversation with Gilbert Burns, brother of the poet, who had a farm there.

He first met Miss Welsh on 21st June 1821. On the 28th he is found writing to her. The impression had been mutual, though perhaps in very different degrees of strength. She had promised to send some books from her father's library, and he had eagerly volunteered to send *her* books, and besides had actually ordered some from London for her use. It is plain he had begged to be "friend" and mental guide. At least definite communication had been effected, with promise of continuance. Anything might happen, though it is easy to believe

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that at this time Carlyle scarcely dared dream of marriage with any one. All had changed since he met Margaret Gordon. Yet if dreams of marriage ever did enter his head (and we have learned the laughing bed talk of Irving and him that night in the George Inn of Haddington), it is as certain Jane Welsh, and no other, was the central blissful figure in the dream.

Miss Welsh we shall have to describe more fully later. In the meantime the two were writing, and Carlyle (that 28th of June) received the promised books.

"With what hysterical speed," he writes her, "I undid the grey cover: how I turned over the poor tomes: how I shook them, and searched them through and through: and found—'Miss Welsh's compliments to Mr. *Carslisle*,' a gentleman in whom it required no small sagacity to detect my own representative."

It was a cruel little flick, but it brings back in a flash the mischievous sender. She was little likely "to have heard the name wrong," but she was very likely to have thought the young awkward rustic friend of Irving was just a little too forward with his books, etc., and to have indicated to him by a neat little twist of the spelling that the impression he had made did not even extend to remembering his name correctly. He winced and showed it, which must have pleased her. It is as though a little window into her character shone brightly in that "Mr. *Carslisle*."

Carlyle's letter shows that he was already in love, even if he did not himself know it, and that he was

in no mood to lose sight of Miss Welsh, so he ends the epistle thus: "In the meantime, if there is any other book that I can get you, or any kind of service within the very utmost circle of my ability that can promote your satisfaction even in the slenderest degree, I do entreat you earnestly to let me know. This is not mere palabra, it originates in a wish to serve you, which must remain ungratified, I presume, but is not the less heartfelt on that account! Farewell! I am always your affectionate friend, Thomas Carlyle." The letter was the beginning of much, but how characteristically do the pair present themselves at the commencement of their intercourse!

Brewster was always helpful. Carlyle had impressed him. Brewster appears to have been ill-used by Fate. Through his own defective abilities in pure mathematics he was handicapped, it is said. Others often reaped rewards through their greater skill there in cases where Brewster's own observations had led him to discoveries which the mathematical acumen of his rivals snatched from him. That is the reason, doubtless, he found Carlyle useful as a mathematician, and did his best to put work in Carlyle's way. Carlyle's tone in referring to Brewster and others in later years is just in the main, but where severe grates somewhat on readers of his letters and reminiscences, Carlyle seems so oblivious of the day when (at least without Brewster's outstretched hand) he had been the worse put to it. It is true, on the other hand, that Carlyle worked hard for poor wages. Yet Brewster was not ungenerous, as the world views these matters.

In the autumn of 1822 Brewster desired the translation of a work on Geometry recently published by the great French mathematician, Legendre. This translation he proposed to Carlyle. The fee was to be fifty pounds, and Carlyle started gladly and at once on the commission. He soon completed it, but he was very painstaking on all occasions, perhaps the most conscientious and apt translator who ever attempted the difficult feat. Carlyle mentions incidentally that the fifth book was a "Sunday forenoon's work." He especially prided himself on the fifth book (the essay on Proportion), which seems always to have satisfied him, and probably satisfies mathematicians still, if they ever chance to read it. Seldom is this important difficult work of translation done by minds so rare as Carlyle's. Goethe was fortunate as well as Carlyle, and knew it.

So was it with Carlyle in Edinburgh, the outlook scarcely brightening at all during the first year of the new birth, 1822. Legendre meant fifty pounds, but Legendre after all was not literature. Until now Carlyle had made no progress thither, though his mind had approached notably could he have read it. And then a great thing happened.

Not to Carlyle at first: to Irving. Him we have seen at Glasgow, frequently walking with Carlyle and now and then writing to him. Since Kirkcaldy the two had been as David and Jonathan. "You will see," Irving used to call out half-laughingly, "the two Annandale lads in the high places yet, looking back with a smile on their early struggles." And Carlyle would grimly but half-believingly shake his head.

Irving was one of the assistants of Dr. Chalmers in Glasgow, as we have said, and as such had apparently preached in the Scots Chapel in London as prospective candidate for the vacant pulpit there. It was the Caledonian Chapel in Hatton Garden, and the salary therefore was one of the prizes of the Kirk in a fashion, though far outside its jurisdiction. Perhaps Chalmers felt uneasy ; for Irving and he did not agree well. Irving seems to have been startlingly novel, theatrical, studied, and artificial. The sincerity which attracted and held Carlyle was concealed so as not to be apparent to any but those who knew the man. There can be no question now on that point. Misguided or self-beguiled Irving may have been—too probably or certainly was, but deliberately a fraud he was not. He pleased the London Scots uncommonly, it appeared, the more readily because they had long since ceased to breathe the conventional Kirk atmosphere, and shortly after the famous walk to Haddington with Carlyle, Irving had been invited to the Hatton Garden pulpit. His success surpassed his own and his friend's wildest dreams. It turned his head. But that was to come. In the meantime idle London, and even fashionable and highest political London, flocked to Hatton Garden. London had found in that winter of 1821 a new attraction, of which at first it was taking fullest advantage.

Sitting in Edinburgh by his lonely fire, Carlyle heard of great ladies and famous politicians, the Premier, the Chancellor Brougham, all and sundry of Greatest London, listening to Irving or being turned away from the church doors. Seats were sold. Ticket-holders paid handsomely. Everyone admired

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The reader will not forget that Carlyle is always aiming at the highest, and not at Fame as the world understands it. His real ambition was to be great, an unconscious, irresistible force within was always driving him. Most men in such a position as Carlyle was now placed would have reasoned that since the Kirk had been discarded and Law had not proved acceptable, journalism was almost the alternative to starvation. Yet his heart does not fail him. Here is a fairly attractive offer leading high, but not the highest, and Carlyle unhesitatingly rejects it. He was now in grim, defiant mood. "Death and the pangs of Tophet and all the Devil and all his works can do! I defy them. Death is welcome." Such is the mood of the Centre of Indifference. We are now receiving the first indications of a new birth.

He was beginning half-consciously to formulate his creed. Carlyle was proud, scornful, contemptuous of humanity, a Scottish purified Swift. His life experience is of course the explanation. It is but bare justice to admit that his stubborn creed was the outcome of his steel-hard life as he beheld it. Yet that life was neither so lonely or unbefriended as he supposed, as we hope to show. The nature of the creed was due to the influence of that of the Kirk, which is naturally profound in what is a mere re-statement of itself. Fortunately for the world, Carlyle no more than the Kirk quite comprehended all the purposes of God in his shorter catechism of *Sartor Resartus*. He left out God's infinite mercy, nowhere more manifest than in the almighty work which elevated a mason's son to the heights of Life and Literature.



What a creed is Carlyle's! Bracing, nerving, a stimulus, a goad! But surely the God who would enforce such as essential for the Hero—if indeed He does enforce it—is but the Jehovah of the Jews who commanded the use of harrows for the better subjugation of the fallen, who sends “ane to Heaven and ten to Hell a’ for Thy glory”! Certainly He is not the God of Christ; and were Carlyle the only product of the new Renaissance, then were our lot as thinkers but little relieved. But he is not.

The Kirk wildly resented the creed when later it made its appearance, proving how conservative man is in religion and also how honest. The Kirk regarded Carlyle in the beginning as little less than an atheist! The hateful, meaningless epithet applied to Carlyle was even more absurd than it commonly is, without meaning, a mere explosion of dislike. Carlyle preached a God actually so akin to Him of the Kirk that one wonders if any took the trouble to read the new doctrine.

Carlyle himself, however, was no better, nay, more intolerant, in his turn. When many years later Darwin humbly and reverently set forth his view of the workings and dealings with man of this same Inscrutable God before whom we are all but as ants, the greatest hardly a hair's breadth above the least, Carlyle met him with intense hostility. He assailed Darwin not one whit less absurdly and vituperatively, far more contemptuously than any minister had attacked himself. He experienced the direful influence of intolerance in the Kirk, and learned—nothing.

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One other special feature of that creed which was now in course of formation will occur to almost every one. Clearly it is a creed for the individual, like the Perfect Life of Christianity itself, but it is even harder to reconcile with the married state. One may defy death, but it is impossible for the heart attentive to the cry of little children to fight for the highest unless indeed marriage prove, as it often does, a real unity. There is a wife to consider. Carlyle, however, did marry, and he married a woman of strong character! Nobly she tried to aid, but her nature was too strong for her. She loved the world and the respectabilities far better than she fancied. The result was really a foregone conclusion. Marriage for Carlyle meant that the wife, like himself, and the children, if children there be, but the wife certainly, must be sacrificed for the highest as Carlyle conceived it. It was inevitable.

Carlyle believed in himself and his creed as men rarely believe in anything. He never realised this second sacrifice. We shall see indeed that marriage when it did come was practically forced on his instant attention. Well for her too in the end he did not realise all it meant. For he had then refused to accept it. But long afterwards, when the bitterness of the contest was a memory and his wife had gone for ever from him, he realised at last, and he doubted the need of the sacrifice as the stricken-hearted will, and was miserable. That is the tragedy of Carlyle.

## CHAPTER VII

### IRVING IN LONDON—THE BULLER TUTORSHIP—1822

FOR some months of the year 1822 after Irving had left him for London, Carlyle, like most men in parallel circumstances, felt himself somewhat ill-used by his old friend, as though he were not occupying the important place in that friend's mind which ought to be his. Only to a small extent did he feel this, but he was excessively proud and little disposed to tolerate the least neglect.

In later years, under matrimonial auspices, he was a great deal readier to read slights into innocent circumstances.

Irving, however, very naturally, was engrossed for a month or two with the necessary survey of his own novel conditions. So far was he in reality from forgetting the almost friendless Carlyle left moping in Edinburgh that he seized eagerly, and effectually prosecuted with most lively ardour, the very first opportunity that presented itself.

Hatton Garden Chapel, to the pulpit of which he had been called, had been built to accommodate a few expatriated Scots and their families who clung fervently to the national forms in religious matters. But the new inspired preacher was soaring far above

the limits of race and country in such matters, and was naturally attracting thither a miscellaneous crowd of all denominations and none.

Among the wealthier and more fashionable of these seekers after a "credible religion" then thronging the modest chapel of the newcomer, in the usual manner of such in all ages, was a certain Mrs. Strachey, wife of a "Nabob" or Director of the great India Company then sovereign of India, a lady like her kind of enormous wealth or at least annual income. She was a lady of some force of character, and Irving had produced a marvellous impression on her. Accustomed perhaps to Oriental and more sensational habits of thought than are common in our gloomier climate, she was greatly affected.

Instrument of Fate like the humblest, she persuaded her acquaintance Mrs. Buller, the wife of an Anglo-Indian Judge, to go to hear the wonderful Scottish preacher, and that lady, eager to oblige a person of influence, did so. Mrs. Buller's husband belonged to the governing educated classes, and at that very moment she had two sons at Harrow at the famous upper-class school there, in preparation for some such career as their father's, if not, in the case of the elder lad, of a far higher one. Charles Buller, the older of her boys, was a very gifted youth, and about this time, when Harrow could do no more for him, he was leaving it. He was considered, however, to be still too young in years and character for the less restrained life of Cambridge. Mrs. Buller was a superior lady, as determined as Carlyle's own mother to educate her sons to the best within her power and means, and sensible enough to guess what was really wanting in

her elder boy's education and must at all costs be supplied—moral discipline.

She applied to Irving, and the result was that Irving suggested Charles's being put, along with his younger brother, under the care of some man of strong moral character yet as fully qualified to impart knowledge, wisdom, and intellectual help as any Oxford Don or other better-known instructors of youth. Such a man he knew of, he told her, whose name was Carlyle, who would ultimately be heard of as one of the great men of his age, the man almost ideally fitted for such a post, if only he would accept it! Irving's advocacy, in fact, was sincere, irresistible, and very clever. Carlyle could no more have obtained such an appointment by his own efforts without Irving's wise and diplomatic humouring of all parties than he could have become Archbishop of Canterbury. Irving let Mrs. Buller know very clearly that the only difficulty lay with Carlyle, not with her: a plain truth but one likely to be scoffed at by a woman of the world.

Naturally, Mrs. Buller determined to possess herself of this wonderful tutor, and after negotiation, entirely with Irving for the real business part, Carlyle was appointed tutor of Mrs. Buller's two sons and particularly of Charles, the elder.

Better "accident" for Carlyle in his then circumstances could not have occurred. Nor did a better tutor for Charles Buller exist at that moment in Britain. Few such negotiations have been so amply justified by events. It is a pleasant episode in biographical history, creditable to all concerned.

The appointment meant two hundred pounds a

year, and the work was such as even Carlyle, the most hard to please of moneyless workers and one of the proudest and haughtiest of recorded men, regarded as worthy of him at the time and calculated to aid his highest ambitions. In letters written home from Moray Street, his lodgings in Edinburgh at the moment, Carlyle mentions the new proposal, but in the most moderate language, where others must have walked on air for a week—poor weak, lovable men!—and perhaps written about it in capitals for another!

Thus he writes to Alexander: "After returning, I set to on a criticism on *Faust*, which the *Review* people were wanting. They have now agreed to pass it till the next number, and I go on more leisurely. . . . While I was busy with this Irving's letter came about the tutorship: for which see my father's and mother's letters." This was the letter (of January 12, 1822) in which he told about the Reverend Mr. Martin's offer of an editorship of one hundred pounds a year, and no doubt partly explains why "he had nae wull o't."

Carlyle's literary hopes were brightening also. Irving had counselled magazine-writing even as an end in itself, but proudly even then Carlyle scoffed at such a fate. Yet he saw its wisdom as a purely temporary means of raising money and training his literary capacity. Aided by Irving's advocacy, Carlyle had latterly been more successful in persuading the Edinburgh "booksellers," as publishers were then called, to accept at least translations from the German. True, as yet they wanted none of his own stuff. Their clamour for that had not yet come. But naturally they were delighted to make use of his translating

abilities. Had the public taste continued and Carlyle been less high-minded and ambitious, he might have earned a great deal of money—for them—in this hard way. Does the reader really wonder that Carlyle was bitter?

In 1822, then, and indeed ever since that blackest summer of 1819, but more eagerly and hopefully since the "Baphometric fire baptism" of 1821, Carlyle was inclining more and more towards leaving mathematics entirely alone and relying exclusively on literature or writing. Indeed, Legendre's *Geometry* marks the close of his mathematical period.

The John Welsh bursaries of Edinburgh University are his testimony in late life to the benefits he traced to his youthful devotion to mathematical study. As an educative influence Carlyle ranked them much more highly than most other modern thinkers. He was guided, of course, by personal bias and the bent of his own mind. Perhaps no man ever lived who was more biased in this respect than Carlyle, but he is always unconsciously biased, indeed innocently so.

He was now under no necessity for teaching privately any longer for the miserable "two pounds a month for one hour's tuition per day." Carlyle had left behind for ever that meagre method of earning a livelihood for one a good deal less wearisome but still trying and socially insignificant, that of a translator and tutor. Already he was turning to account the German he had so painstakingly mastered among the corn-rigs of Mainhill and by the kitchen hearth of his father's home, through sheer force of industry, a good dictionary, and a big brain.

"The tutorship will yield a net revenue of Two hundred pounds a year. Where is the risk, then, my boy Jack? And if all this evaporate, I can still translate and compile and write and do rarely."

So Carlyle writes his brother John at the moment of entering upon his duties. Brave words from a gallant heart! words which bring a warm affection for Carlyle when the reader knows that the dauntless fellow is writing to reassure his brother as to his perfect ability to forward that brother's University ambitions. Such would be an unusually noble trait in any one. As we have pointed out already, it is one of the most pronounced and generous traits in Carlyle. So soon as the business of the tutorship was concluded, indeed before the arrangements had been concluded and in characteristic defiance of whether they were concluded or not, Carlyle had settled that John was to come to Edinburgh to attend the University in the following winter, and had even informed the Bullers that he would himself prefer not to live with his charges, if that could be avoided, but in lodgings of his own.

His purpose was to share these with Jack for the advantage of both. As it usually chanced, however, it was in reality often very much for the troubled endurance of the two. Carlyle, as leader and planner always, was naturally inclined to be domineering. He formed his decisions bravely and very loftily, and was impatient even in discussing them. He was, we say again, of the true "blood royal," a born king of men by divine right. He expected instant obedience and utter loyalty; but he was regally generous and greatly good. Carlyle could neither yield nor bend, negotiate



nor compromise. Every inch a king, he was brave to the death, audacious for the highest and that alone, and royally regardless of limit to his benefactions.

He has described for us what passed on the arrival of his pupils in Edinburgh in a letter to John of the 30th January 1822. "The carrier came in," he tells his brother, "to-day, and found me in such a bustle that though I scrawled off a letter for home, I fear they will be able to make neither 'top, tail, nor root out of it. . . .'" .

"The boys arrived about a week ago, and are to continue some six months at board in the house of one Dr. Fleming, a clergyman, till their parents arrive. I have entered upon duty, but in a desultory way. I have offered to take the matter upon trial, for a month or two at any rate, and then, if it answer, to commence business regularly, and with the regular salary—two hundred pounds—and an allowance, in the interim, instead of board. Mr. Buller, the father, wished some abatement in this period of uncertainty. I proffered leaving the payment at his own discretion for the two months : and having *no* further uncertainty at all. The memorandum in which I stated this, together with some other considerations necessary to be impressed upon the man, is now in his possession. It was written with as much emphasis as I could contrive to write with respectfulness. Irving also has spoken magnificently of me : so that if I enter the family at all, I need expect no supercilious or uncomfortable treatment there. . . . I have not quite succeeded in *bodddoming* the fellows yet : I am rather inclined to hope they will *do* : levity and inattention are the prevailing faults, and in the elder boy they

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dimly aware of it. Nevertheless, he was exigent of his remotest rights and hard to deal with, for the world views these things differently. Carlyle was there to teach the world it was wrong.

When later the parents came to Edinburgh, to be near their sons, they tried to induce Carlyle to attend the dinners they gave; and did manage to entice him to some of the more promising. They meant to help Carlyle in their own way. They liked him. But Carlyle was just as particular concerning the folk who could be permitted to help him as he was about people generally, and he did not respond. At the beginning, however, all went merrily, and Carlyle both liked his work and pupils, and took great interest in them, while never forgetful of his own high claims on himself.

The country was passing through a heavy season of depression in 1822, and money was scarce. In Mainhill old Mr. Carlyle was feeling the long strain and looking for dangerous times in the country. Proud though he was, he was glad to get  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. abatement of his rent, but thought it too little! His son encouraged him cheerily. In a letter of February 1822, Carlyle tells his father that he means "to set about writing some Book shortly": the "boys improve on him." He adds: "That great-coat will not suit Edinburgh any longer. Jack may have it if he like—if not, any one." Carlyle was beginning to dress more carefully under the Buller influence.

His brother Alexander was becoming despondent of his chances as a farmer in the bad times. He thought seriously of emigrating to America—as many

years later he actually did. In a wise letter of courageous brotherly affection, Carlyle argues against any such confession of weakness. Skilfully he strikes the chord of patriotism in words which deserve preservation: "Never, my boy, you will never think of it. Scotland has borne us all hitherto: we are all Scots to the very heart: and the same bleak but free and independent soil, will, I hope, receive us all into its bosom at last." The allusion reminds us of the severe, solemn cast of Carlyle's mind so early manifest. But how foolish it makes the charge against Carlyle of lack of patriotic sentiment.

The *Review* in which he hoped to effect an impression of himself and for which he was perhaps writing his *Faust* essays of this period, seems to have been the *New Edinburgh Review*, a rocket-like periodical which soon expired. It was the property of one Waugh, a "bookseller" of the time, and Carlyle complains thus to his brother John about him on the 7th of April 1822: "Waugh the bookseller I caused pay me: and he has done it like a scurvy person—with fifteen pounds, where there should have been five-and-twenty." "The *Review* has so limited a sale, the etc., etc. I design writing no more for him, unless driven to it by a necessity harder than I like to anticipate." It is the old story, common to all ages, of the journal with insufficient capital. Carlyle had no patience with the least departure from an honourable understanding.

He was sometimes, as now, deprived of his just and modest dues; but it must not be forgotten that the poor bookseller was perhaps losing an infinitely larger sum, through no fault of his own either, and

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that it was more natural than Carlyle ever permitted himself to think that the publisher should try to persuade his contributor to take a little less. The class of magazine to which Carlyle contributed has never (at any time) possessed many readers. Possibly purchasers are much scarcer.

Carlyle judged the question strictly from the moral side, but the evil lay in his regarding it from this side only, which (that the world might scoff at him) was his own. Poor Waugh may have been honest enough: for the *New Review* soon passed under. There is every excuse, nevertheless, for Carlyle being sore and angry. The debtor most likely arbitrarily refused to pay, rather than begged indulgence; Carlyle, however, had no right to refuse to consider the bookseller's side of the business, as he invariably did. Besides, had he not openly stated that the people who bought books were "fools"?

His time during the day was now more pleasantly occupied. He went to George Square, where his pupils resided, in the morning, and spent the day with them, taking his dinner alone or with the younger boy, in preference to dining at the senior table (as it were) always by his own choice. The late afternoons and evenings were his own, and he toiled incessantly at his translation work for Brewster, while he strove diligently to find something of his own to say and write, struggled hard to be a poet, to compose literary essays, and generally qualify himself to be the literary man he now perceived clearly he must become, in default of any nobler and higher way of making a living. For that and no other is

the reason Carlyle eventually took to literature. Two of the settled professional ways of doing so he had tried and found impossible. For medicine he seems to have had no personal inclination, though he recommended it highly to John, as later to many inquirers after he had become a national oracle. Had there been any other profession he must have found it also unsuitable, for, although he had as yet exhibited no great promise of ever becoming a skilful artist in literature, still he was on the way to find his creed, and was in all things more ready than he supposed. When the amazing skill and artistic word portraiture of the *French Revolution* later revealed him as a consummate artist, and captured the world by storm, Carlyle was complete.

Irving, too late, had entertained a fleeting fancy for Miss Welsh, but he had returned to his allegiance to Miss Martin of Kirkcaldy, whether or not he was practically (though easily) forced thither by the lady herself or her guardians. There seems little enough doubt were it not that all the documents on the matter with which we have concern are one-sided, all of them inspired and impressed by Miss Welsh herself, who later revealed so keen a dislike to Mrs. Irving (Miss Martin). She complained, for example, bitterly of the "hypocritical" kiss that lady gave her on bidding her farewell. But, under the circumstances, the little "society" kiss might well have meant a mere fulfilment of supposed correct etiquette! It received the worst construction: why not the story of Irving's courtship also?

Froude has given the story from Mrs. Carlyle's point of view. No other has found place in literature,

because Mrs. Oliphant had written and published her *Life of Irving* long before Carlyle's death, let alone before Froude's *Life of Carlyle* had been written. No other is ever likely to be heard. The more need, then, for the reader to remember that there must have been another side. Irving married Miss Martin in 1823, so soon after his settlement in the Hatton Garden ministry as was practicable. He proceeded to Scotland for his honeymoon tour, and one of his numerous kindly marks of friendship was to call on Carlyle, who at the time, as we shall see, was at Kinnaird House, the Highland residence of the Bullers, reading with them and hard at work on his *Life of Schiller*.

The circumstance would be outside Carlyle's life altogether were it not for the fact that Irving's marriage made a great deal of difference to Carlyle as regards his relations with Miss Welsh. Miss Welsh had loved Irving "passionately," as later she was to confess to Carlyle before their marriage. Irving indubitably loved her. The circumstance profoundly affected Carlyle's entire life, because it influenced that of his wife, and is a fact requiring consideration in one's conceptions of her.

Ever since the day he first met her, Carlyle had taken Miss Welsh into his own existence, as it were, and probably never dreamed of his future save with some thought of her. We have seen that a correspondence had been commenced between the two at a very critical moment in his own development, and now with his circumstances growing easier—thanks to Irving and his high character, which had impressed Irving—when he is turning half-

consciously and expectantly to German literature and finding wonderful intellectual food there, the correspondence is being continued, under different conditions and with warmer hopes.

Miss Jane Welsh, like his friend Irving, her old-time lover, is one of the paramount influences in Carlyle's life. More than any others these two were fated to enter into the lonely existence of Carlyle and affect it profoundly. Since eventually he is to marry Miss Jane Welsh and she is to become "the light of his life," the unwearied helper in all of good or worthy that he ever did or attempted, it is necessary that we should now consider her more narrowly and specifically.

With her enter into the life of Carlyle not Romance indeed, but light, airy femininity, mockery, bright comedy, honest human affection, and alas! Tragedy. Round her circles all the sad and remorseful lamentation of his closing years and the bitter controversy that has raged so pitilessly across his grave.

## CHAPTER VIII

MISS JANE WELSH—HADDINGTON—1821-26

"Oh, it is beautiful to me, and oh, it is humbling and it is sad. Where was my Jeannie's peer in this world? And she fell to me and I could not screen her from the bitterest distresses! God pity and forgive me! My own burden, too, might have broken a stronger back had she not been so loyal and so loving."—*Reminiscences*, "Jane Welsh Carlyle."

IN the moving words placed at the head of this chapter we are listening to the heart-broken and anguished lamentation of an old man bewailing the loss of his life's companion. They are the bitter cry of one who cannot be comforted; the impotent despair of one who would so gladly have shielded whom he loved but has been held back by destiny. The world has read them literally as cries for forgiveness, because Carlyle's nobility of soul drove him to accuse himself. The world has been unjust to Carlyle. For not even the least of these "bitterest distresses," under which a bright-eyed young lady changed into a sad-featured and world-weary woman, could have been evaded by her husband if he were to remain loyal to himself and her. They were inevitable for the "making" of him, and had they been avoided he could never have become what he was, and no book on Carlyle would ever have been written.



The essential error which Carlyle's nobility of soul thus manfully appropriates will become apparent the moment the reader turns from the grim grey presentments offered both by Carlyle, when old and weary, and by Froude who reflects so faithfully this mournful but essentially deceptive mood, and approaches the entire circumstances from the proper direction, viewing them as they actually occurred and really were, as in short they appeared to Carlyle himself at the time.

Miss Welsh we have already made acquaintance with, and we now turn to the consideration of her family and their circumstances.

When Carlyle met her in June 1821 Miss Welsh was in her twenty-first year. Born in 1801, she was the only child of Dr. John Welsh, the leading physician and one of the most prominent residents in the little country town of Haddington.

The town is a typical Scots county capital, and it is the market-centre of one of the richest agricultural districts in Scotland. In the opening years of the nineteenth century the society of such a town was, for this reason, superior socially to that of Annan and neighbourhood, which supported in general a less luxurious folk. The greater comfort and wealth of the residents of the Lothians had been noted both by Irving and Carlyle as being more attractive to them and the people as more broad-minded than any to which they had as yet been accustomed.

Dr. Welsh in particular occupied a high position among this county society. He was a man of marked character and ability, a humane, able and skilful physician, very popular among his patients and the

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rest of the Haddington folk. As leading man and doctor he was a man of mark, but he had better claims to gentility even than these, which appealed far more nearly to the worldly-minded. He belonged to a county family, was himself a landed proprietor, and was reputed perhaps a man of greater wealth than the facts warranted when at length death claimed him.

Haddington is the birthplace, or stands in closest proximity to the birthplace of John Knox; and the local status of the Welshes could scarce but be improved by the claim they could advance of being the lineal descendants of the Reverend John Welsh of Ayr, John Knox's son-in-law. Carlyle himself leaned to a belief that the family tradition was probably well authenticated, since Craigenputtock, the estate which belonged to Dr. Welsh and his ancestors before him, had actually been a portion of the paternal heritage of the famous divine, and had been excambed or exchanged for some other estate.

More dubiously, too, the little daughter of Dr. Welsh could claim a reputed descent through her mother from royal and warrior Bruce. Her father had married a lady, herself of county importance and a reigning beauty of "ancient lineage," whose maiden name chanced to be Welsh also, though the parties stood in no degree of relationship. Altogether, if one fact more than another had impressed itself on the quick and intelligent mind of Dr. Welsh's pretty young daughter, it was that she belonged to an uncommonly good family, of distinguished social importance; and she was disposed likewise to regard its present social circumstances as permanent, fixed and

unalterable in the nature of things. Jane Baillie Welsh was her full name, and she was very proud of it, and thought it stood for a great deal. So much is apparent. From her earliest years she had been brought up with a romantic and deep-seated notion of her family's superior social status, now and throughout the generations.

Craigenputtock, the family estate, had been in the possession of her family for centuries. Dr. Welsh indeed had purchased it from his own father, even in that father's lifetime, rather than allow it to fall into the hands of strangers through the financial embarrassments which had befallen the head of the house. Family pride was one of the strongest traits both in Dr. Welsh and his only child. It had been strong enough indeed in his case to induce him to buy in Craigenputtock when as matter of fact the transaction seems to have absorbed almost his entire little fortune, the fruit of his professional activity.

His last will and settlement had apparently designed Craigenputtock as his child's heritage, and had bequeathed the estate to her, *ex facie* unencumbered by any provision in favour of his widow, who was thus left without maintenance of any description out of her husband's estate. Scots law resembles that of Rome in according to children and widows an indefeasible right to a share of the property of the paterfamilias. They cannot be disinherited. It follows that the will of Dr. Welsh was not valid, and could have been overturned by the widow had she chosen or been so advised. For no other property seems to have been available. Craigenputtock was either the bulk or the entirety of her husband's fortune.

Froude does not notice the point, being unfamiliar with Scots law, and Carlyle makes no mention of it either. On the contrary, he invariably considers what follows as due solely to the generosity and warm heart of the daughter. But in spite of the will, and enforceable at law had Mrs. Welsh found occasion, that lady was entitled to her widow's right or *terce*, one-third at least of the income derivable from Craigenputtock.

Dr. Welsh had died suddenly, the result of a fever caught in the prosecution of his duty, some two years before Carlyle came for the first time in Irving's company to the house that had been his at Haddington. We are not specifically informed whether there had already been any disagreement between mother and daughter as to the terms of the last will and settlement. But it is reasonable that Mrs. Welsh should have been profoundly disappointed, and may have been both angry and surprised, at her dead husband's seeming disregard of her interests. Somehow one gets the suspicion that there had been trouble, though all we are definitely told is that Miss Welsh herself, very generously and far too impulsively, solved all legal and other difficulties by conveying the entire income from Craigenputtock in *liferent* to her mother for the length of her days, reserving nothing for herself, and retaining merely what lawyers term the fee, that is the capital or real property for herself. In fact she postponed all interest in her father's property till the death of her mother.

It was a creditable, a disinterested, but it must be confessed a foolish thing to do, and it affected her position more than she realised, calamitously indeed

in the event of a marriage. She was to all intents and purposes an "heiress" no longer, she was dependent on her mother meanwhile, and if she married she could bring but postponed benefit to the joint estate. Perhaps at times she regretted her impulsiveness, and certainly her mother and she could never agree. Disputes between them were endless and never ceased all their lives.

The fact is an important one and should not be forgotten. Long before marriage with Carlyle could ever have suggested itself even, Miss Welsh had already parted with any advantages there might be in her better social position. She was completely dependent on any husband she should determine to marry. When she told Carlyle long afterwards, he approved highly of what she had done. But to alter what she had done at that time depended on the goodwill of her mother, Mrs. Welsh, rather than upon the daughter. Her mother, as we shall find, had always goodwill in abundance, but her wishes and desires to help were never acceded to. Why?

Far greater trouble and disillusionment were to befall Miss Welsh from this impulsive and ultra-generous act than she was aware of at the time we speak of. She was thinking of Irving possibly when she did it, but its full meaning and ill-effects only dawned upon her later on, when her marriage with Carlyle drew to a consummation, and finally became a fact.

It was the source of many of their "bitterest distresses." It was necessary for Carlyle's full triumph, but at what a cost! Whoever married Jane Welsh must labour to support her. Her social dis-

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tion was to render no aid to Carlyle but to appear a heavy hindrance. All this lay in the unsuspected future, however, at the time we are dealing with.

By June 1821, as has been said, the home in Haddington had been left desolate to the mother and daughter, and the arrangement between them just spoken of had been established. The daughter had loved her fond father very dearly, and home was very miserable indeed for the warm-hearted girl. She was little more. Carlyle tells us in his own sublime way, "Never father was so mourned as hers." Thirty years later she can still hardly bear to speak of her loss even to him. Almost to the last the dead man was never named. She always referred to her father as "He" or "Him," allowing his memory to monopolise these, in strange unconscious pagan reverence for the taboo, "name-not-to-be-uttered," and in simple uncontrollable grief.

Dr. Welsh had been a proud and loving father. He tried to avoid the besetting sins of fathers in his position, and it is probable that for a man with an only child he indulged her but little. As probably the sharpness of her temper and a certain petulance, or desire to be comforted, may have arisen from the disadvantages of her loneliness. It is likely she was somewhat "spoilt." Her father too had possessed little confidence in his wife, and had somewhat flagrantly perhaps overruled her and disregarded her wishes. Mrs. Welsh is said to have been a lady of whims and humours, herself a spoilt beauty, without marked character or discretion. The bright-eyed, sharp-tongued little daughter may have noted the

father's ways, certainly she adopted them, and even exaggerated them it may be.

The only child had been brought up at her own passionate request, "as a boy." The father had yielded to this ardent and precocious wish on her part the more readily perhaps because he had no son. In these days such an upbringing appeared much more dubious and odd than it would to-day. Girls were educated then to be mothers of households or housewives, rather than to be citizens with an ability to earn their own living. Jeannie Welsh, however, had been taught Latin and mathematics just as boys were and girls gladly were not. The father had informed the parish schoolmaster, who was also her tutor, of his daughter's unusual wishes, and the tutor had entered into the scheme with heart and soul.

That schoolmaster, as we have said, was Irving. Young, ardent, and enthusiastic, he had put all his intelligence into the work. Miss Welsh was the daughter of one of Haddington's most important residents, and was gifted besides with the brightest and quickest intellect of her own. She was curious, eager to learn and quick to assimilate; and above all she was the prettiest, freshest, fairest young beauty Irving's eyes had ever beheld.

Irving had required no urging. The young lady's education had moved apace, till in the end she was inspired with the strongest love for literature and literary greatness, and for wisdom and knowledge, the fuller nobler life of humanity. No common civic existence was likely any longer to content her. She had ambitions, and Irving's wise encouragement had roused them.

She must have been too young, one would suppose, for Irving to fall in love with while yet she was his pupil. But he had been glad and eager to keep up the intimacy with her family after he had left Haddington, while Brown, who was his successor as schoolmaster and tutor, was his friend, and had continued his work for him on the lines he had laid down and had so carefully considered. Irving besides had entertained an unusual respect for Dr. Welsh and was very proud of his friendship. On his part the Doctor had formed a high opinion of Irving's capacity, and doubtless hoped much from the young man. But certainly neither Irving nor Carlyle (whom he never even saw or heard of) were likely to have occurred to such a man as suitors for his only daughter's hand, much less as sons-in-law. If the emotions aroused both in Irving and in the daughter existed in the father's lifetime, which is improbable, her father cannot have had the remotest suspicion of them. Yet it is certain that while only twenty years of age, and shortly after her father's death, Miss Welsh is found "passionately" in love with her old tutor, a love based on his literary power and fascination one would imagine as much as upon any personal admiration.

The net result of all this and the one circumstance worthy of note is that the daughter at this time was only too eager and anxious for a change in her dreary circumstances, and this mood was to grow ever more imperative as she grew older. She desired her freedom more and more passionately. In view of the marriage with Carlyle that was eventually to follow, it will be well that the reader should bear this in mind. From the very first moment of their acquaint-



ance Miss Welsh is almost resentful at her circumstances, and she is yearly to grow more and more disconsolate at a fate which seems to doom her to a petty existence in some narrow social sphere, while within herself rages a fierce rebellion against her lot, together with dim literary ambitions that promise freedom. From the first, as we shall see, Carlyle inspired her with hope. Latterly he was her only hope, and she accepted him. The reader will find there the aspect of her story which impressed herself. That is the story of her marriage from the point of view of Jane Welsh. But there is another aspect, from the point of view of Thomas Carlyle, which the world has now to consider.

“That painful class stationed in all provincial cities behind the outmost breastwork of gentility, there to stand siege and do battle against the intrusions of grocerdom and grazierdom, which had actually seen dishonour in the society of Burns, and branded him with their veto,—had as we vulgarly say cut him,” was very much the same class as that to which Dr. Welsh and his daughter belonged, with the sole difference that theirs was stationed in Haddington and not in Dumfries. All his life Carlyle had known this class well, and despised it for its makeshifts and petty tyrannies. If that had been all, the matter would have rested there and Carlyle would have left Miss Welsh severely alone for all her social distinction. But it was not all, thanks to Irving very largely and the literary ambitions he had roused in his fair pupil.

From their meeting in her mother's drawing-room in that old-fashioned, stately, but strictly business-like

town house of her father in the main street of Haddington, Carlyle had detected something far different from mere social elegance in the fair young beauty who then for the first time entered his lonely life. If the lithe maiden grace, the fascination of face and figure first arrested the young man's eyes and riveted his attention, they did not hold it and roused no answering response from his heart, till he heard from her lips that she too honoured and desired the higher life which was calling himself, that she too put wisdom and goodness above worldly rank and wealth, and that she too had ambitions for a life devoted to literature. We know from himself of the ineffaceable impression Jane Welsh made on his shy, sensitive, and retiring nature. Carlyle had never heard any one talk as this young beauty talked. "It was the beginning of a new life to me." Carlyle was sincere from the beginning. For the time being, and for long after, it was talk without reality to Miss Welsh.

The bright-eyed, fascinating, well-dressed and accomplished Miss Welsh was a prize to Carlyle as probably to all other young men who knew her. She was the "toast of the town" in the old phrase; in his despairing moments far above him in the social sphere, and in brighter ones the one being necessary for his future happiness. We shall find her frequently reminding him of the difference between their stations, with the effect, possibly not unpremeditated, of making him the more ardent in pursuit.

We are in a position now to follow the further course of their correspondence and to trace the gradual change from literary guidance and com-

panionship to the expression of dearer hopes and aspirations whither it so surely led.

We have seen the first books arrive from Haddington to the grey lodgings Carlyle inhabited in Edinburgh, and we have witnessed his eagerness to improve on his unpropitious beginnings. The billet with "Miss Welsh's compliments to Mr. Carslisle" had provoked him to mild expostulation. But his main object had been successfully achieved. A correspondence was maintained. All unknown to him Miss Welsh was passing at this very moment through the most trying and critical experience of her unmarried life. She was holding both Irving and herself true to their honour, and resolutely thrusting from her the prospect of happiness, till such time at least as her lover had freed himself from the engagement already contracted at Kirkcaldy. At the best she could have but little heart to discuss literature seriously with Carlyle when she was engrossed in such suspense. Though she must have broken with Irving some time before the spring of 1823, when he married Miss Martin, she has no encouragement to offer for Carlyle's warmer protestations before that date.

Carlyle was entirely ignorant that any love passages whatever had passed between these two. When at last she told him he was already deeply engaged to her, and their marriage, as we shall have to note, was the almost immediate result. For the five years of the correspondence not so much as a suspicion seems to have occurred to him of such a possibility, though he might have detected, had he been less high-minded, an extreme bitterness on her part towards his good

friend Irving, and he might have sought for a cause in something that had passed between them.

This, however, is to anticipate. We return to the correspondence as at 1st September 1821, three months after their first meeting. "My dear Madam" is the introduction to a very long letter. "On again noticing this crabbed hand of mine I fear you are ready to exclaim with some feelings of surprise and displeasure, 'Why troublest thou me?'"

The initiative of course was his, and indeed, as we have seen, she was scarcely in a position to take much real interest in this new and insistent admirer. "It is impossible for me," he goes on, "without many peculiar emotions to behold a being like you entering so devotedly upon the path of letters which I myself have found as full of danger as it is of beauty; and though my own progress in it bears but indifferent testimony to my qualifications as a guide, I may be allowed to offer you the result of my experience such as it is, and to pronounce the 'God speed' which I wish you in silence so frequently and cordially."

"My sheet is done," he concludes, "while my subject is scarce begun. Shall I not have another opportunity to enter on it? I still entertain a *firm trust* that you are to read Schiller and Goethe with me in October. I never yet met with any to relish their beauties; and sympathy is the soul of life." He signs it, "her sincere friend."

Miss Welsh can have had no notion whatever of Carlyle as a possible husband at this time, but she must have realised that "sympathy is akin to love," and here was a young man demanding it. Carlyle's contemporary thoughts on the subject—wild thoughts

doubtless already possessed his heart, in the immemorial way of a young man with a maid—were more truly prophetic it is likely than her own. Did she observe, one wonders, that already he was asserting himself as leader and guide, seeking to introduce her to *his* favourite authors, to influence *her* and bend her to *him*?

On April 30, 1822, Carlyle is found prophesying, not of himself but of her. It is plain she loves literature for the worldly fame and social distinction which excellence in it confers, and he is seeking, as he always did, to convert her to his own high beliefs and a life of moral greatness. She has "talents," he tells her, "a great keenness of intellectual vision generally," with a "decided tendency to the study of human character, both as an object of curiosity and of love or contempt, and to manifest a very striking faculty of expressing its peculiarities, not only by description but by imitation."

It was highly characteristic of Carlyle, and illustrates very well his habit of regarding all matters from their highest standpoint, that the qualities here detected in Miss Welsh do not suggest to him that Miss Welsh is cut out for an actress, but that she is qualified to shine as a playwright or author. "This is the very essence of dramatic genius," he continues, "and if I mistake not the blame will lie elsewhere than with Nature if you fail of producing something worth producing in that department." That was Carlyle all over; but the pity of it is he is inspiring *his* fair correspondent not only with noble ambitions; he is rousing hopes of worldly advantages as well. How swiftly was all this to change!

There is a notion that Carlyle's genius extinguished hers. It is erroneous, as we hope to show; for the fact is Carlyle's lofty moral greatness so altered her life, giving it a definite aim and purpose only in conjunction with his, that in the end she found herself with nothing to say. In reality she had no call to literature in the higher sense. She served indeed her highest purpose when she took her great place in the making of Carlyle, and supplied that more worldly-wise, shrewder, practical, "this world" nature his own loftier character required in order to make its presence more manifest and effective to the world. She did for him, as we shall see, what he could not have done, or refused to do, or at least omitted to do for himself. She made him known, literally as but for her he could never have been known. She helped him "as none else could" to become what he was.

But already increasing intimacy with Miss Welsh is found to be encouraging and exaggerating in Carlyle that lamentable abusive habit of speech which was hereditary in himself and needed far different treatment. Surely it was unfortunate that these two strong characters first came together at the precise moment the woman's least womanly and sympathetic side was uppermost. Poor Irving had entangled himself and her, and, little as she now suspects, he was yet to inflict, unwittingly, infinitely more trying suffering on her. One has not the materials wherewith to pass judgment on Irving. It does not matter now who or what was to blame. The fact of importance to us is simply that Miss Welsh was for the time being a bitterly disillusioned

young lady, little able to allow her own sweeter, gentler nature full sway, or to believe very much in highly moral protestations on the part of Carlyle or anyone else. The letter which provokes these remarks is one Carlyle wrote in July 1822. Apparently Miss Welsh has been silent for some weeks, and Carlyle has had to wait longer than he likes. He likes and dislikes very passionately. "After a very admirable display of patience," he begins, "I was rewarded one evening, while I thought of no such thing, by the sight of your much valued packet. 'That ass' I never liked; but then I absolutely hated her, and wished fervently that she had either delivered you from her inane presence altogether, or at least timed her visit better."

The two of them had met again, in Edinburgh presumably. The contemptuous allusion is obviously to some mutual acquaintance, a lady, with an unhappy predilection for being *de trop*. "That ass" is a quotation from Miss Welsh's letter, and throws a bright flash on that young lady's epistolary style, her lively fashion of speech, and her vivacious, offhand way of condemning everything and everybody for the moment out of her good graces. Just because Jane Welsh wrote letters so very naturally, which were such perfect expressions of her sarcastic, shrewd, and contemptuous self, she is one of the very best letter writers among those whose letters have been published to the world,

"That ass!" Poor Carlyle, so eager to stand well with Miss Welsh at that moment, hurries to improve upon her, and unhappily for himself he is only too well able to do so. For his part, "he

absolutely hates her." Note an unfortunate consequence. Carlyle imports a warmth of sincerity into his diatribes, while in her the habit is a reflection of passing irritation. He always makes matters worse. He exaggerates. It would all have been very trifling and merely lover-like, had it not been that these two were yet to call so many people "that ass!" whom the world thinks particularly well of.

Miss Welsh's encouragement was unfortunate. For the habit grew and strengthened, till in the end no one trait of Carlyle more surely vexes and irritates his truest admirer. It is all so far beneath him. Great and good man as he is, he is far from being impeccable. Carlyle at least did not rout his devil with an ink bottle.

"It is truly gratifying to me to contemplate you advancing so rapidly in the path of mental culture." "The Miltons, the De Staëls,—these are the salt of the earth; "they derive their patents of nobility direct from Almighty God." (Carlyle never forgets his Burns.) Then in another strain he laments: "I verily believe you are quite right in your estimate of me. I seem indeed to be a mere talker, a '*vox et præterea nihil*.' Look at these unspeakable jingles I have sent you."

They were sending each other their literary efforts, and since poetry was then in fashion and both were young, especially since Goethe and Schiller were to be their guides and exemplars, Carlyle was sending her verse and encouraging her to send hers to him. Months after marriage he is still urging her to literary effort. At Comely Bank she is still busy with Greek tragedy, but slowly



and surely the temporary, and probably merely reflected, glow died away.

So Carlyle wrote to her, but one perceives that her letters must have been in another strain, stimulating, putting Carlyle on his mettle, rather than encouraging, if by that we mean praising. Her influence must have been the finest possible for a young man. Probably her scornful references to him as a mere talker rankled more than she knew. Irving of course had disappointed her, and Carlyle was bearing the brunt of it. That was the fact, but Carlyle was ignorant of that explanation. He was always too readily disposed to undervalue himself. Like all great literary men, probably, he would have loved to be a man of Action, for which his training had unfitted him! After he had become famous he begrudged the stern fate which had made him so great in literature. Yet he could never have been great without it.

Her criticisms nettled, and there seems little doubt he was subject to much gentle and ungentle raillery, all very much for his own literary good in the ultimate. Miss Welsh, however, was not sceptical of his talent. Rather did she underestimate or doubt altogether his moral greatness, and feared *that* was talk; as it had been in the case of another.

"I have some doggerel translations," he tells her, "which I meant to send; but they are not fit to be seen by you, perhaps never will." Doubtless he sent them after all; for he is always more successful in translation than in original verse. Most likely they were lyrics from *Wilhelm Meister*.

His life must have been happy at this time at

least. Happiness depends too much on the individual temperament for us to be dogmatic about it, but it is impossible that a man can be anything else than happy in such a position as that now occupied by Carlyle. A new and splendid influence had entered his life, and extended a roseate glow over prospects lately so dreary. The human heart has marvellous recuperative powers at twenty-five, and Carlyle was little older. Her scorn and her raillery goaded him to his utmost endeavour, while his rapidly growing love supplied him with a motive and purpose. Above all, that love was under the perfect control of reason, was indeed more and more but an unconscious grasping at something recognised as lacking in himself, and it was free from all jealousy or other less worthy earthly accompaniments.

The lovers met each other as they found opportunity. He went to Haddington most probably as often as he was invited thither. We shall find that Miss Welsh, rather than her mother, was the real power in the Welsh household. A letter of December 1822 shows that Miss Welsh visited Edinburgh, as she did frequently no doubt, and they met there also. It affords us incidentally a vivid glimpse of one such lovers' meeting, and of the walk along Princes Street which was a feature of it. They viewed the jewellers windows with the eagerness and joyfulness of youth; and one of the actual conversations is recalled by the terms of the letter. "How many things there are I do not want," said Carlyle, pointing to the jeweller's window. "How many things there are I cannot get," was the honest reply of Miss Welsh.

Carlyle reminds her of that reply in his letter, but very foolishly adds, doubtless to gratify her, that she was "speaking the honest language of nature, and slyly unmasking my philosophy."

She was doing nothing of the kind in reality, though as truly she may have been speaking the honest language of her heart in hers. Carlyle is simply lowering himself to please her, could he have seen more clearly. The language himself had used is his natural way of speaking, just as much as hers is her own. There was some excuse for the shrewd young lady beginning to question seriously whether this lofty philosophy of her male admirer was a genuine utterance or a sham.

The unveracity—for such it is—is characteristic of Carlyle. Had an enemy said this of him, what a torrent of abuse would have awaited him! Carlyle can regard the same incident very differently, according to whether he loves or hates the individual concerned in it. Professor Nichol relates somewhere a still more amusing instance where Carlyle's fine memory had played him traitor. A phrase which he terms "ruggedly honest" (or some other equally honourable appellation), when he thinks it is the saying of his good old father, becomes "some fool's speech or another on what occasion I forget," when it is viewed without the aid of the clan spectacles!

Sometimes the expressions he uses in his letters must have brought him well within the reach of the sharp tongue and the light scoffing of his fair correspondent. "This, my dear Pupil," with its smack of the schoolmaster, must have made her gay with mischievous merriment. As yet there was

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a fund of gaiety in both these young folk. The iron had not yet eaten into the soul of either. Their fiercest trials were to be undergone in each other's society, and together as married people.

How different might it all have been for both parties, how much bitterness might have been avoided and mistrust allayed, had Carlyle only known all about the love affair between Irving and Miss Welsh. How much softer and kinder must she then have appeared! If only she had told Carlyle from the first! That Carlyle was already a great deal more to her than she was prepared to admit is proved by the fact that she feared to lose his respect, and preserved silence on that account. But such a fear implied also that she little appreciated Carlyle's true moral greatness, if even she recognised its existence as the real practical force in him.

At the very time of Irving's marriage, so early as April 1823, Carlyle is addressing her more warmly, and has apparently declared himself more or less as a future husband, her destined companion and fellow-worker in literature. "Never waver, my dear Jane! I shall yet stand a-tip-toe at your name." It is impossible to avoid being affected by the words, when one remembers how very differently Fate was to unroll for these two restless souls. Jane Welsh was never to reap fame in her own right.

In these early letters of the courtship Carlyle is always encouraging and praising her for her literary skill. Forgetful of his own dominant moral character, which yet was influencing himself and her beyond everything else, he is urging her to her literary

destiny as he regards it. He is to aid her. "I shall yet stand a-tip-toe at your name."

That was never to be. The end we know, and the end was already inevitable, could Miss Welsh have realised that incalculable moral force in him which Goethe discerned from his far distance. But she may be excused if, yielding to her own ambitions, she believed the future would unroll as her lover said. "I shall yet stand a-tip-toe at your name." Never through all the long years was Carlyle to do that, or look upward to her. But as certainly a day was to come when he was to stand a heart-broken, world-weary, and penitent old man and plead for forgiveness by her grave. He was blind to the mighty power of love in her which might have blessed them both, on which he made no call, which was let slumber into impotence.

With Irving out of the way marriage presented itself as a probability more and more likely, and even desirable to them both. They spoke of marriage, however, between themselves alone.

Carlyle knew perfectly how little he could expect to marry Miss Welsh (or anyone else) for a long time to come; while Miss Welsh manifestly had never brought herself further than to acknowledge to Carlyle and herself the promptings of her own heart. Actual unromantic marriage was far away, and no reason existed anywhere for contemplating an early union. Carlyle was a brilliant youth with immense possibilities,—that was all. He had his position to make before he could think of marriage. So thought Miss Welsh, and she never hesitated to remind him of the difference in social status between their re-

spective families. She could not have acted so had she been in love with him.

By popular report Miss Welsh was an heiress. Carlyle must have thought so, since he could scarce think otherwise. In reality, however, as the reader knows, the case was not as Carlyle imagined, if indeed he thought of it, nor as the world supposed. Neither the world nor his own wife has ever given Carlyle the credit he deserves for acting as nobly as he did act in the marriage which was at last to follow. Much injustice to Carlyle has resulted from a misapprehension of the facts in their true bearing.

## CHAPTER IX

KINNAIRD CASTLE, PERTHSHIRE: *LIFE OF SCHILLER* BEGUN FOR *LONDON MAGAZINE*, AND TRANSLATION OF *WILHELM MEISTER*, 1823: LEAVES KINNAIRD HOUSE, FEBRUARY 1824

IRVING was never forgetful of Carlyle. His sense of friendship was so strong that he considered the success of Carlyle a necessary claim on himself now his own, as he thought, was assured. Carlyle never accords his best friend the gratitude he ought, nor ever seems to have realised the enormous influence Irving had on his own later success. It is his creed that brain power and hard work must win in the end if the wages claimed be a zero. But his own wages never reached that stage. The reason they did not is that Irving stepped in to supply for him the deficiency nature had left, for through his own lack of business instinct they did reach almost to total destruction. Carlyle had ever the proudest notions of the world coming to him, and not of his begging the world for a chance of livelihood. The notions might have been fatal to him had not Irving made up the deficiency by conferring tutorships and introductions to editors, which Carlyle never asked and too plainly little regarded. Yet not even a Carlyle can live on air.

Not content, as almost any other friend would have been, with what he had already done, Irving was busy everywhere, advising and encouraging Carlyle, and going about among publishers and editors (who now flocked round the new London preacher) singing Carlyle's praises. Granted that he had a magnificent subject, and was therein fulfilling a noble duty towards one of the world's "forces" or great men, no one will admit that this consideration appeals to any man very strongly in real life if he is even aware of it. Irving could merely guess Carlyle's greatness. In Carlyle's own case friendship rarely extended so far, save in the case of men already very greatly distinguished like Tennyson, and under far easier and more comfortable circumstances. As a friend Carlyle ranks high, but not so high as Edward Irving.

One such publisher was Taylor, who was then proprietor or editor of the *London Magazine*; and, at first through Irving's eulogies and latterly through its own visible worth, Taylor had now agreed "to give Carlyle his chance" in his pages. Carlyle had already, as we know, stumbled on German. He had no "journalistic instinct" perhaps, but he had this time lighted on a promising field. He could now supply what the curious and thinking part of the world wanted, led to a knowledge of their want by the maddening hints and concealments, yet evident treasure trove in Coleridge. De Quincey, the journalist, had detected the same "want"; so had others. Carlyle alone had detected the stature and grandeur of Schiller and Goethe; and it was not in Carlyle to give the world what *it* wanted. It must



have needed all Irving's sublime assurances of future fame and money to be derived from association with Carlyle to have persuaded Taylor to give Carlyle "his head," to take what Carlyle would offer. But he did succeed. Taylor had agreed to adventure the *Life of Schiller* in the pages of his magazine and pay him translator wages, though this was not translation merely. Boyd, the Edinburgh publisher, agreed to take *Wilhelm Meister*.

Carlyle accepted Irving's arrangements calmly, and as his merest dues: gratefully, but with strict moderation in his gratitude. We shall learn that he did playfully chide Miss Welsh for being "so wicked" as to laugh at Irving; but Irving must have been hurt had he known Carlyle's defence of him to her had been, comparatively, so weak.

All this time Carlyle was attending very closely to the education and future of his charges also, and particularly of the bright and promising elder youth, Charles Buller. Carlyle was beyond doubt the shrewdest observer then living, skilled in reading the human face, and he had formed high hopes of the lad, while at the same time noting the wayward tendencies. Death intervened in this matter of Charles Buller, and the promising youth of a being who had but just entered Parliament at his death, and had done little, is all that is left to vindicate these hopes. Carlyle seems to have loved him as he seldom loved, and to have been gayer, less severe, and more natural in young Buller's society than he generally was.

Judge Buller was a wealthy man moving in high social circles, and both in Edinburgh and elsewhere,

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so long as Carlyle remained a tutor and lived either with the Bullers or in close proximity to them, he moved in a far more dignified, more leisurely, humane and (let it be acknowledged) kindly world, than any to which he had yet been accustomed. This operated to the great advantage both of his life and thought. His purview now included more divisions of men than formerly. He learned that the aristocratic and wealthy classes were *not* all lazy and brainless. He might have seen, indeed, in these years people like Lady Lyttelton, later chosen to be governess to the Princess Royal, "who were high bred and dignified without pride, rose at six in the morning, kept all the family disbursements and spent the whole day usefully," whom the young Brookfield, later a friend of his own, knew in those very years as mother of *his* pupils. Carlyle was brought to see the "upper classes" face to face, finding them on the one hand so much kinder and more courteous than he had supposed; and on the other, as individual human beings, very much like his own father and mother, and the humble class into which he had himself been born—like some regal soul strayed from its proper destination in a palace. Poor little Chatterton's soul and Shelley's had gone even further astray; and that of the former had entered the wrong century!

Carlyle is strictly just perhaps to the Bullers, but severe. As a matter of fact, it was his duty to be grateful to the Bullers, for, finding him a man of some worth, and coming to appreciate his unpayable services to themselves, both the Judge and his wife were very kind to him, inviting him freely to their dinners  
meet the distinguished folk who gathered about

them wherever they lived. Most men of the ordinary breed in Carlyle's position would have utilised the social influence thus thrust on them to further their own private, get-rich-quick, or get-social-rank-quick interests. Carlyle scorned the breed, one of his infinite kindnesses to our poor world! As "employed" servant Carlyle had his faults, as grateful recipient he is not remarkable for lavish gratitude, but he taught the world how to be independent and self-respectful, and showed it too how it must be humble in the presence of its betters of inferior social rank.

In 1823 John came to the University, and his brother's society for awhile in the same lodgings proved grateful, if latterly trying to the imperious, generous, but strong-willed and weak-stomached Carlyle. In all his own complexities of work and thought Carlyle found ample time to lavish letters, care, counsel, and money on his own. He took as much care of John as of Charles Buller, for the "clan" appealed strongest to him. Some of his most thoughtful, best-considered letters, critical of literature, history, and great men, were addressed to John his brother and Miss Welsh his sweetheart, to use the old phrase, now so sadly vulgarised. To his mother he wrote letters all his life, as often as he could, which was perhaps weekly, letters too which must have amazed the distinguished men he moved among later on, full of the finest descriptions, pen portraits, the kindest and most lucid criticism of Schiller and Goethe, and all he was writing and doing, —wonderful letters, surely the most marvellous ever "peasant" mother received. The old lady who read

and treasured these, who understood them, as she must in her way have done, was no "peasant" as London Society regarded her, even though Providence had seen fit to make her body from peasant materials; which is the supreme divine fashion of Providence, in scorn of worldly distinctions which are inappreciable from the Heights.

Yet how strangely, after all this, does a letter of this very time read which his mother in these days received. "Often, often, my dear mother, in coming years we shall yet drink tea there" (at Mainhill—home), "enjoy our pipes, and friendly chat together, and pity all the empty gorgeousness of the earth." The old lady smoked apparently as much and as often as her illustrious son, as was the custom first among old Scotch ladies and later among the lower classes, till now the habit lingers only among the old and the "tinker" or gipsy class. Old customs finally die out among the peasantry or lowest class, where conservatism or use and wont is strongest.

But the "Bullers" meanwhile were growing weary of the grey skies of Edinburgh, and fixed on Kinnaird House in Perthshire as their next residence. Carlyle agreed to accompany them, the more gladly because the ill-health and dyspepsia which had befallen him, and had been less acute these last months, was now tormenting and torturing him. He could not tolerate the more elaborate dinners and cookery of the Buller establishment, but Mrs. Buller listened attentively to every complaint, and willingly altered house rules and regulations to suit him. Otherwise he felt he must give up a task which, while beneficial to him, was not absolutely necessary, now that he could hope to

publish shortly some of his translation and Schiller work.

The family removed to Perthshire in the spring of 1823, and Carlyle made a brief holiday home while the removal was in process. "Thou'se a vast leaner lad since thou gaed away,—is Tom got better?" was the greeting John said he received from his welcoming relations, and one fancies Tom would get much the same. His old mother would scan him eagerly, for Tom was ever all the world and more to her. She had been anxious concerning his health, and she was never at ease about him, for all the long letters and presents he showered on her to reassure her that he was well. He spent, as he wrote Miss Welsh, "a joyful week in Annandale amidst scenes in themselves unattractive or repulsive, but hallowed in my thoughts by the rude, but genuine, worth of those who people them." He was anxious to stand well with her, and he had now discerned for himself the difference between refinement and rudeness, though he still inclined to the notion that worth and rudeness were more commonly associated; he never lost the latter illusion to the last.

Kinnaird House is said to have been a beautiful, well-wooded ideal Highland residence with soft green lawns and river. Most men "would have given their ears" to be located in it, on terms so ideal as Carlyle's. Yet he did not so regard his lot. At first the balmy air, fine scenery, and deep stillness soothed and pleased him. His own apartments were in an "annexe," or extra house adjoining the larger one; and, except at meals or for tutorial work, he seldom frequented the latter, preferring the humbler portion as a retiring

man would. His window, he tells his sweetheart, opened on a "fine bowling green with goodly trees all round, and thrushes singing in them." Here he purposed "to think sweetly of friends far away"; of one such at all events.

Carlyle never suffered extreme poverty, and never in all his life did he live in *very* disagreeable situations. The lowest he ever reached was existence in mean Edinburgh lodgings, teaching students mathematics, in the appallingly depressing, pitiless, grass-grown, back streets of the Scottish capital. That was bad enough, but thousands live their lives in them, struggle for years in them, and die in them. For the rest "tastes differ," but any man may well envy any other of Carlyle's "situations" or residences. Craigenputtock would be heaven for many an exile, nay, under such conditions as Carlyle and his wife enjoyed it it must have been very desirable indeed to the great mass of their countrymen. The weary grimy toiler in London (even an incipient Carlyle, should there be one) may well look with eyes of unutterable longing and envy towards this ideal home Carlyle thought so little of. Few men have defied and toiled and struggled and risen so comfortably, sunnily, well-housed and circumstanced as Thomas Carlyle.

His health, however, even in such surroundings, was again to seek, and dyspepsia once more had him in deadliest grip. Black care and ill-health sit behind the horseman! Carlyle was a horseman, and had always been able to enjoy riding when at home. Now that he was earning good wages he thought he would try whether riding would not ease his torments.

His brother Alexander was instructed to buy him a horse, and having bought one at Boswell's Fair, took him north to the ailing and complaining one. This horse was the famous "Larry." Later, Carlyle complained of meanness, and reckoned Larry had been starved; a handful of oats and abundance of chaff, etc., not being sufficient for a horse used to oats. One cannot tell what was wrong, but Carlyle wondered at the meanness of great houses, as lesser men have done.

The riding produced little relief, but Carlyle toiled on, translating *Wilhelm Meister* or writing *Schiller*. These works betray no signs of the circumstances attending their execution: and it is not easy to discover how much of each day was really made miserable by the foul fiend. All the day could not have been, though manifestly the disease grew worse and worse, till at last its constant presence drove him to the distinguished Edinburgh physician, who advised Carlyle to give up tobacco, since tobacco, and nothing else, that worthy alleged, was to blame. This was the physician immortalised (though not *nominatim*) in later years as equal in skill to the "first hairy long-eared jackass" one can meet.

Whatever the dyspepsia or stomach trouble really was, the Kinnaird House period, like the dark Edinburgh lodgings period, was a very painful and mind-harassing one, through its coincidence with a certain crisis of the disease. On one occasion later, Mrs. Carlyle described their Aberdour holiday residence as "like a madhouse," through the same thing. Carlyle spared none when he was suffering, and since he was on the whole a kindly man, beloved

of his house-servants and warmly loved by old friends, the chances are that he *did* suffer dreadfully from stomach pain, or weakness. And since he could never discover what ailed him, its cause or its cure, he was impatient to excess, and made a vast to-do. Altogether dyspepsia is written large in deep dark lettering across his life. That being so, it must have affected his work somehow.

The *Life of Schiller* took shape slowly. Its first appearance was in serial or magazine form, and it was in this form he completed it at Kinnaird. Later, he elaborated the different articles and bound them all together as a book, but that was not yet. The last touch was given so late as 1872, when he added the very needful element of details by translating Saupe's *Schiller and his Household*, and appended it to his own *Life*. This is the *Life of Schiller* by Carlyle we now possess.

If he groaned and complained, he worked and, to all appearance, enjoyed life "as well as the next man." Nothing is more remarkable in the life of Carlyle than the number of the "blessings," the alleviations, he had for the hard task we have all to face. He had always throughout his life his riding horse, and he had his happy mother's home to go to; he had his summer tours, his trips to and fro all over Scotland, England, Ireland, France, and Germany. Carlyle was rather a favourite of fortune, and there is no use admirers pretending otherwise.

"Well! I swear it is a lovely world this, after all. What a pity that we had not five score years and ten of it!" These do not appear like Carlyle's words, yet he uttered them or wrote them to Miss Welsh in



1823. "Meanwhile," he continues, "I go on with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, a book which I love not, which I am sure will never sell, but which I am determined to print and finish." Here it is again, the old fallacy! Carlyle was not going to print it at all, and was going to be paid something at least for his translation of it. It was the bookseller who was to pay him, and would have to pay out of his own pocket for the printing of the book which would "never sell." Yet Carlyle takes all the credit! To be sure, however, the publisher had his own opinions, and did *not* lose. Be very sure, also, that the keen-witted, mocking Miss Welsh knew *that*, as she was yet to realise the discomfort of living with a man who did not know it, and never did. If the Hero is to get all the honour and praise of the great book, published in defiance and scorn of public taste, and with almost certainty of financial loss, he ought in common justice to pay the printing and publishing. Carlyle could not. Can it be he was blinded, like smaller men, by self-interest?

"You observe," he tells his friend Johnstone in these years, "I am verging to the Lake School in sentiment? I will leave it then." When later he visits Coleridge, as he will do in London, Carlyle is only too well prepared already for antagonism. His observing eyes will note the corkscrew gait, the shambling walk, and the "sum-m-jeet, om-m-jeet," rather than the weary, infinitely sad, old man Lamb saw and the world sees to-day, writing his incomparable

"Dewdrops are the gems of morning  
But the tears of dewy eve,"

"telling the jest without the smile!" In these thoughts one is most readily disposed to be amazed at Carlyle's "hardness," his great loss rather than his fault, as may yet be apparent.

*Wilhelm Meister* he has already criticised for us in his Translator's Preface, but he animadverts rather more piquantly for Miss Welsh's ear alone. "A task which suits me little," he calls it. "There is poetry in the book, and prose, prose forever. When I read of players and libidinous actresses, and their sorry pasteboard apparatus for beautifying and enlivening the 'moral world,' I render it into grammatical English—with a feeling mild and charitable as that of a starving hyæna. The book is to be printed in winter or spring. No mortal will ever buy a copy of it. N'importe! Goethe is the greatest genius that has lived for a century, and the greatest ass that has lived for three. I could sometimes fall down and worship him: at other times I could kick him out of the room." But he would not say that publicly?

"I love Irving, and am his debtor for many kind feelings and acts. He is one of the best men breathing: but I will not give his vanity one inch of swing in my company." So he wrote Miss Welsh, perhaps to reassure her that Irving was not a "great" man. Apparently she was "very wicked" when criticising him.

Irving—did he allow Carlyle's vanity no inch of swing?—for his part, resolved, as we have mentioned, to see Carlyle at Kinnaird House while he was touring near on his honeymoon. He went out of his way, indeed, to do so. Carlyle met him and the newly married wife (his old acquaintance Miss Martin of

Kirkcaldy) at Dunkeld, and he accompanied them to Broughty Ferry, staying with them in their company two or three days. In a letter to John, of 20th October 1823, Carlyle gives a most vivid picture of Irving, rather severe in the circumstances in which these two men then stood : " The hair of his head is like Nebuchadnezzar's when taken in from grass : he puckers up his face into various seamy peaks, rolls his eyes and puffs like a blast furnace : talking abundantly a flood of things, the body of which is nonsense, but intermingled with sparkles of curious thinking, and tintured with his usual flow of warmhearted generosity and honest affection. We talked and debated and the time went pleasantly along. He was for me up to London with him for three months in summer to see the world, that so I might begin writing in good earnest. I said Nay—the offer being incompatible at present with my other engagements, and at any rate savouring too much of patronage to suit my taste."

Since Carlyle accepted it after all, and went to London, when it *did* suit his arrangements, in the following year, and since he had already accepted many favours, it would have been as well had he not added the last reason for refusing. It betrays an independent mind ill at ease because a good noble friend has laid it under heavy obligation ; that, and sheer worldly pride.

" *Schiller's Life and Writings* is printed in the last number of the *London Magazine*. The editor sent me a letter full of that essential oil, flattery, and desiring to have the remainder of the piece without delay. Goethe is in consequence suspended. I begin Schiller, Part II., to-morrow, if I can."

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There is no necessity to criticise any of Carlyle's work before marriage and the discipline of life had fashioned him into the Carlyle we know. There is, however, perceptible already a vast difference from the *Encyclopædia* work. If neither style nor matter is very Carlylean, the essentials of both are present in *Schiller*. The voice for the first time in the world's history is the voice of Carlyle, not yet speaking in characteristic tone (affected mannerism, said the best critics then), but heralding the familiar credo. Carlyle's *Schiller* has received high praise from critics, perhaps higher than it deserves (for there is a void somewhere in it, an emptiness), and certainly higher than Carlyle put it, who recognised the meagreness. Only when it is contrasted with other "Lives" do we recognise how far (though handicapped) he outdistances others.

Besides his labours on *Schiller*, however, he had his translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* to do, a book he had first read at Mainhill some years before. For *Meister* he had already secured an Edinburgh publisher.

One moment of ecstasy, or at least frank, full enjoyment of the present, was enjoyed at Kinnaird. In the *Times* appeared a review of the *London Magazine*, and the reviewer called attention to the "eloquent" passage recounting the noble literary life led by Schiller and Goethe. It was the first praise well earned and fitly bestowed Carlyle had received in public, and it was read very gratefully by the young author. The probabilities are that Carlyle always had a kindly eye for the *Times* thereafter, and a grateful remembrance of this first praise. When he was old and

famous he wrote two very important public letters, one on the Franco-German war (where he espoused the German cause warmly and proved the German claim to Alsace-Lorraine), the other on the rumoured intention of Disraeli to force a war with Russia in the interests of Turkey some year or two later. Both were sent to the *Times* and appeared there. It is at least not to the discredit of reviewing that its first mention of Carlyle is that he was "eloquent." For, whatever else he was, he was eloquent as few have ever been.

Carlyle resembled lesser men in this, that he desired to do his best, but he differs much from most men in his consistent efforts to do his highest. The best efforts of a man ought not to be inconsistent with his highest efforts. In life, as matter of fact, they never are, but they often appear to be. The best for Carlyle now was to perfect himself as a master of literary expression, and to do this he required all the time every day allowed. He felt this, and the inclination seems to have led him very naturally to expend all his spare time, after tutoring hours were over, in his work of translating *Wilhelm Meister*. Occasionally, and very persistently, he tried to write verse, and failed because he had nothing to say which can be said better in verse than in prose. Carlyle never confesses this, but characteristically became scornful of verse, as though verse and not himself were to blame! So scornful and foolish did he become as to write solemnly in his great Essay on Burns—the essay of massy gold—that Burns had to pour his soul through the poor medium of Scottish song, the most meagre

cranny that ever Scottish son of thunder possessed! These songs of Burns move the entire world of far-scattered Scotland, move the continents her sons possess, while Carlyle's noblest work speaks to the few in any land—the wise. Which is the narrower?

*Wilhelm Meister* and verse efforts (requiring more time and vexation than the dullards possibly suppose) occupied the spare time Carlyle spent in his own quarters. He dined alone. Mrs. Buller arranged *that* for him out of deference to his stomachic necessities. He appeared at the "regular dinner" as seldom as he could, but he was free to it and to the society gathered there. Life must have been very delightful; at least in his "lucid moments," when free from internal pain and nausea. He rode Larry regularly. He toured about as he pleased. He did his work to the grateful satisfaction at this time of his "employers" the Bullers, and he was succeeding at last in literature slowly but progressively. His work was being published in the *London Magazine*, and he was very much in love and corresponding regularly with "her," his circumstances and residence were far superior to that of the countless majority, and he was young. He ought to have been very happy. Probably he was. For all he had done, for all he could exhibit in the way of abilities or work achieved, Carlyle was being well paid and well treated at Kinnaird. Emphatically, he had his share of the blessings. "God has been very good to Thomas Carlyle," might well have been his thankful thought in Kinnaird. It may be doubted if the thought was often present in

Carlyle's self-reliant mind at any period. It is to be feared it was not in this.

No poor man's son who possessed a contempt for wealth and had at this time earned so little, could well have enjoyed more of the advantages of wealth than Carlyle did now. The same good fortune (and better) was to be his lot in the year following. Carlyle had never bowed his head, or had it forced down for him, to the yoke of servitude. He was never any man's servant in any degree. He had ample holidays every year always, and he was so lucky as to have a dear old home of birth to go to. He had now his riding horse. Even the surliest inhabitant of Ecclefechan must have admitted that things were going well with Carlyle.

In November 1823, however, his disease gave him real cause for anxiety as well as occasion for sorrowful plaint. "That some change must be made in my arrangements is clear enough. I seem, as it were, *dying by inches*: if I have one good day it is sure to be followed by three or four ill ones. For the last week I have not had any one sufficient sleep; even porridge has lost its effect on me. I need not say that I am far from happy. On the other hand I have many comforts here: indeed, I might live as snugly as possible if it were not for this one solitary but all-sufficient cause. I know also, and shudder at, the miseries of living in Edinburgh as I did before: this I will not do."

He saw the "long-eared jackass," and gave up tobacco entirely—for three weeks. He put himself under dire treatment of mercury, castor oil, and other medicines, but found he was little the better.

This was after a visit to Edinburgh, where he saw the best skill his young medical student brother John, or anyone else, could think of. It is to be noted Carlyle had not thought of calling in special skill earlier. For a wise man he was very careless in these matters, with a strong disinclination and scepticism in the matter of doctors. This experience of his confirmed the tendency, always carelessly foolish. He never forgave the anti-tobacconist. Part II. of *Schiller* he completed the day before he started to Edinburgh to see the doctor—and Miss Welsh.

He thought of giving up his situation, a serious matter. But Carlyle never hesitates in matters of this sort. He could work, and he would risk starvation. Professor Nichol remarks his bravery very truly. No man has ever surpassed Carlyle in contempt of consequences, if his brain and conscience approved. He cared nothing for the brain and conscience and power and strength of others. He was the bravest man in this regard we have record of.

But the "Bullers" were not yet weary of the "special arrangements," and they perceived clearly the enormous benefits Carlyle was conferring. Charles Buller made great progress, but his mother dreaded still that he was too young and unformed to face the irresponsibilities and freedom of Cambridge. The Bullers were urgent and Carlyle was willing, but he was in bad health. His illness had become acute at the time they were proposing to leave Scotland to live in London again. His departure now must have left them awkwardly placed; but his remaining with



them implied his going to London, besides a desirable improvement of his health. He made up his mind at last that he would remain with them a little longer. The Bullers left Kinnaird in February 1824, and Carlyle, who had energetically begun Part III. of the *Schiller*, left also to rejoin them in London. He obtained leave of absence for three months.

## CHAPTER X

### MAINHILL—FIRST VISIT TO LONDON—1824

THIS leave of absence he resolved to spend at Mainhill, partly to reassure his mother, who had been alarmed (as well she might) by the continuing ill-health of her son, and partly because he calculated wisely on recuperation and reinvigoration, through home influences and the fresh country food and air of his native hills.

"If I did not see my native hills once a year I think I should die," said the great Sir Walter Scott, Borderer of Borderers. Carlyle was not so outspoken; was very ignorant, indeed, concerning the mysterious and all-powerful spiritual influences dominating such patriotic country-loving souls as those of Scott and Burns, or Beranger and Whitman, and very scornful often of mere poets and men of verse who shared them. But he revealed his own acquaintance with the truth, though he gave no expression to it, by the annual excursions he made all his long life to the peaceful, restful valley of his birth. He was often in need of recuperation, and he found it always beside his mother, as, after her death, in his motherland. And he lies buried beside her, not a stone's-throw from the room wherein he first opened his infant eyes. What a circle!



*Thomas Carlyle*

## CHAPTER X

### MAINHILL—FIRST VISIT TO LONDON—1841

THE leave of absence he resolved to spend at Mainhill, partly to reassure his mother, who had been alarmed (as well she might) by the continuing illness of her son, and partly because he calculated upon recuperation and reinvigoration, through his mother's influence, and the fresh country food and air of his native hills.

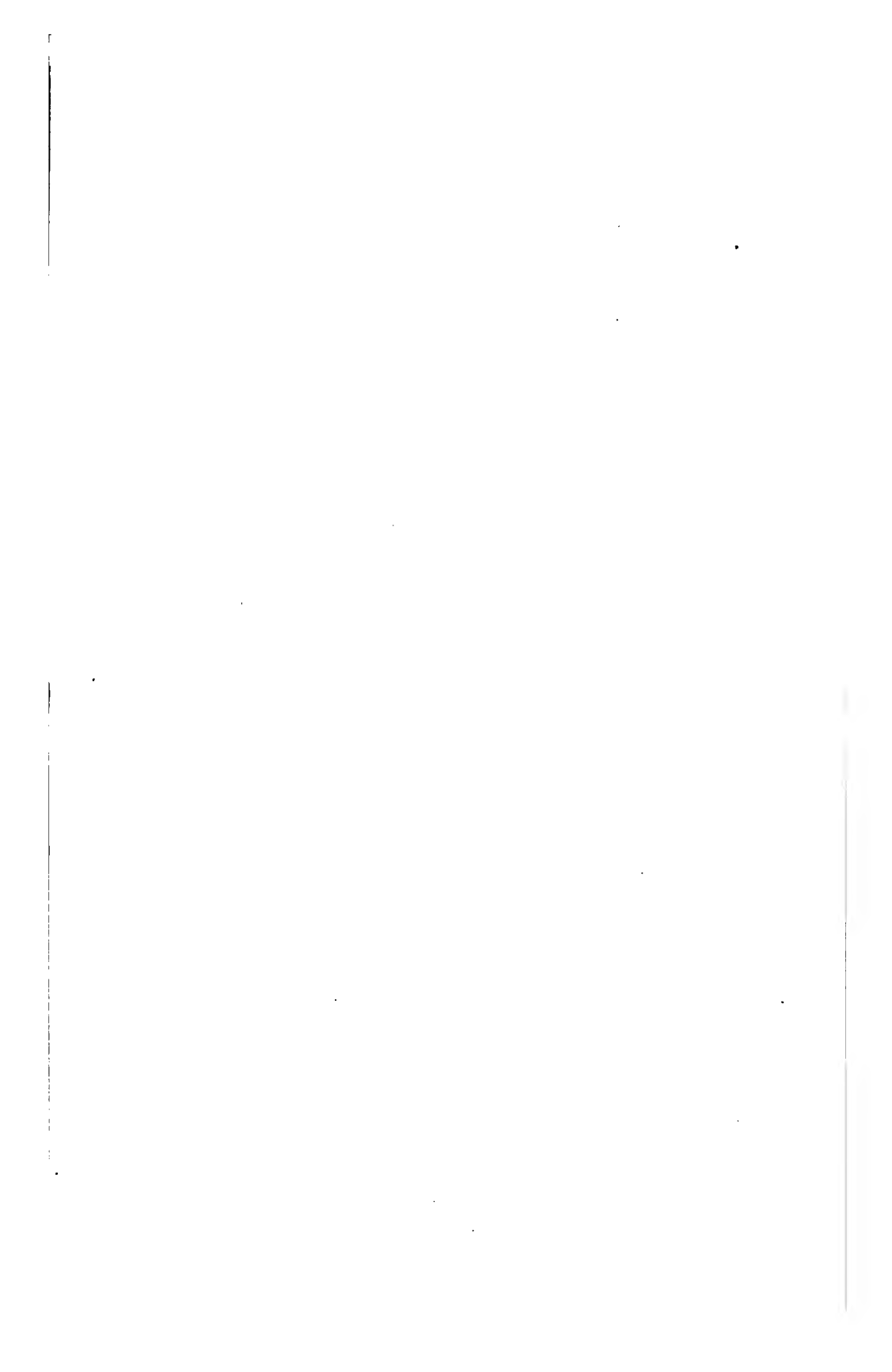
"If I did not see my native hills once a year, I think I should die," said the great Sir Walter Scott, *Borderer of Borders*. Carlyle was not so outspoken, but was very ignorant, indeed, concerning the mysterious and all-powerful spiritual influences dominating so patriotic country-loving souls as those of Scott and Burns, or Beranger and Whitman, and very scornful of mere poets and men of verse who shared them. But he revealed his own acquaintance with the truth, if such he gave no expression to it, by his annual excursions he made all his long life to the peaceful, restful valley of his birth. He was often in need of recuperation, and he found it always best to go home, as, after her death, in his mother's bed. And he grew fonder of his mother, not a stone's-throw from him, when he first opened his native hills. What a wonder!



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*Thomas Carlyle*



First of all, however, he must go to Edinburgh. *Schiller* had to be completed and Part III. brought to a finish before he could call his holiday earned, and he moved into his old lodgings, beside John, in Moray Street, to accomplish these tasks. At the same time he had his translation of *Meister* on his hands, far from ready for the printer, the translating indeed not yet over. There was need for a final spurt. The Bullers would have been amazed to see how their sick tutor, who had been and was so grievously ill, employed the first part of the three months' holiday. Carlyle knew no rest till his task was completed, whatever it was he put his hands to.

Miss Welsh came to town,—inevitably. Doubtless she told him “she scarcely ever went to town now,” “could not promise,” “feared it was impossible,” and ultimately hurried there, eager, as the “timid fawn” so often is, to have glimpse of the huntsman. Froude says that they had a bitter quarrel, and that Carlyle “flung out of the room, banging the door after him.” She was very penitent afterwards, and wrote the usual little penitent note “to make it up again and be friends,” all in the orthodox manner. Incidents like these are so common, not least among young men and women who have become great, that they tell us nothing. It is all so certainly what we should expect. They are the “renewals of love” we learned at school, on good Latin authority.

In Edinburgh, Carlyle concluded at least one of the arrangements he had anticipated. He arranged matters for *Wilhelm Meister* (his now completed translation) with Boyd, one of the publishers there. Edinburgh publishers were doubtless more impressed

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by that time with German translations, since Carlyle could tell them, and they could see for themselves, how large a space German thought was occupying in London magazines. This was not mere translation work, however, Carlyle was offering, and the terms seem ordinary and usual and mean. "Carlyle was to receive £180 on publication for the first edition. If a second edition was called for Boyd was to pay him £250 for a thousand copies, and after that the book was to be Carlyle's own." Froude gives the arrangement, with the interest he (naturally) himself possessed for all such bargaining, the interest of another man of letters.

Carlyle reckoned he was "at least sufficiently paid for his labours." Perhaps he was; for it was the work of spare hours and did not take him many months. From Boyd's point of view all depended on the numbers bought. The first lot were easily disposed of, and Boyd was fairly recouped, as much probably as he expected. Carlyle was never swindled, or even taken advantage of. Many a man with tastes so inexpensive and such contempt and incapacity for business would have taken £100 for all interest in the work, and obtained nothing else for all eternity.

Froude remarks acutely, and it must be allowed correctly, that Miss Welsh cared nothing for the book itself, but a very great deal for the amount of money it seemed to promise for Carlyle. It was the beginning of disillusionment which, in her case (if critics would only see it), was simultaneous with the gradual perception on her part of his supreme moral greatness. She was annoyed, "with ample reason," says the



world, at a man so proud of the work and the spread of Goethe's influence it entailed, yet so little inclined to save the money jealously for future house furniture and marriage and married-life expenses! To her, marriage was to be all in all and for her own "fame," "if she ever did marry," and she was in a hundred moods on the matter. To him, marriage meant no difference—two to keep instead of one, indeed, but no particular house or extra expense. The letters show Carlyle had never even considered the economical details connected with marriage. Not by the least visible indication is there one thought of the consequences of marriage, children, not even by veiled allusion, happy laughing prophecy, or solemn thought, does he indicate that he realised for a moment what marriage meant for any woman, for Jane Welsh like the rest. Marriage, to Carlyle, in its highest, was to all appearance at least but literary and very dear companionship, a constant presence of the loved one, but nothing else. Carlyle never longed for children: the keenness for paternity, so conspicuous in Burns, is the least-marked feature in literary men, but Carlyle is more indifferent than any other literary man, with the sole significant exception of Swift.

He tried to argue with her concerning the worth of *Wilhelm Meister*; yet he agrees with her as he would have agreed with no other, that after all, save for the fairy child of tragedy, Mignon,—elf-child of the *Scarlet Letter*, or worse,—and certain lofty educational thoughts, dreams, and surmises, the novel as a work of art is clumsy and of little interest, a mere collection of brilliance and intolerable dulness. Most readers find it so; asmost for give Goethe everything,

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even this "novel," for the sake of that ethereal child of doom,—daughter of Œdipus,—Mignon.

Froude says that Carlyle was very happy at Mainhill during this holiday. Well he might! He had finished his translation of *Meister*, and he had already found his publisher. A hundred and eighty pounds was due him, and now lying ready for him in Edinburgh, as first wages for the task. He was on the eve of departure for London the mysterious, London the mighty, the voice which is always calling the ambitious and the eager, the unconscious great! For it is the voice of power and fame and *man*;—the most many-voiced, multifarious mob-voice in all the world and in recorded Time, the voice of Millions. He was in love with as fascinating, eager, literary, refined, and good a "little lady" as his eyes had ever rested on: and, miracle of miracles! she did not despise his grim old father, nor his loving peasant mother, nor him; and she would wait "till he could marry her," and would never, never, never marry anyone else. He was dreaming the old dream of eternal constancy, fidelity, and trust, which, alas! can only be fulfilled by the dead whom the gods have loved. None living but must awake from it to human imperfection, disillusionment, and loss: and some go mad in the waking.

"So you laugh at my venerated Goethe and my *Herzen's Kind* poor little Mignon. Oh, the hardness of man's, and still more of woman's, heart!" He rails laughingly, soothingly at her, but if he had not been in love he would have been shocked in sober earnest at the revelation. It is a significant index pointing to an ungentle, hard-hearted, humorous, unsympa-

thetic, or probably Calvinistically prude lady, rather too "goody" and hard-hearted, stern-minded rather than pure-minded an individual for a rough existence and impoverished surroundings. One likely "to kick over the traces," if literature be carried into life. Carlyle meant nothing else than to carry it into livelihood. Miss Welsh began to be seriously uneasy. Should a man like that marry at all? He possessed an irritatingly feeble conception of the financial necessities of matrimony. There and nowhere else lay Miss Welsh's hesitations. Such was the solid "common sense" which was their justification.

Children would have made all the difference. It was Carlyle's infinite loss that he was never to become a father. We are told that it was Jane Welsh's unspoken ambition to have children. It is hard to believe it. These words already quoted prove it could scarce have been so; but all women have a healthy desire some time to become mothers, else the race would perish. The lack of children proved sorer to her than to him, as it always must to the wife rather than the husband. Yet *his* heart, as we see, was really the tenderer, and hers was less tender than the average.

The secret of the pre-nuptial hesitations of Mrs. Carlyle lies in Carlyle's "financial" unfitness to marry her: the secret of her promptings lay in her growing respect for his moral greatness and her love of his brilliant intellect, so grandly now (she thought) "at her feet." She was yet to be one of the women of history, but never, as she dreamed in these pre-nuptial days, in her own right. She dreamed then that

Jane Welsh would yet be a name in people's mouths, and in pursuance of her dream, for months, perhaps years after marriage, as Carlyle mournfully confesses (adding, that he never took any action on the subject or prevented her), she appears to have clung to the maiden form of name and "ignored" the "Carlyle" which marriage had added conventionally to that. Yet destiny had arranged it differently. Only as Jane Welsh Carlyle has the world the slightest interest in her. She gained her wish by resigning it.

At Mainhill Carlyle had his mother to satisfy concerning the "young person" whom he had already written of from Edinburgh as "my good Jane." Carlyle had made a trip to Haddington, doubtless to enlighten Mrs. Welsh as to his intentions, and to formulate proposals; for he sends his mother a gift ("a small cheap shawl," *he* calls it) which had both been "selected and cheapened" by his fiancée (for that is what she had become). Did he consider the "cheapening" likely to recommend her to his frugal mother, who doubtless "loved a bargain" as well as ladies of far higher rank do? Or did the astute Jane strive to appear wisely economical and fit for a poor man's wife? No matter what her status be, a mother can never regard any woman as the equal of her favourite son, still less is she disposed to consider any prospective daughter-in-law as of status *above* him. But even the anxious mother in Ecclefechan must have been as proud of this proposed match as she was undoubtedly convinced Miss Welsh would serve very well, and be a good, economical wife for her son. No suggestion, how-

ever, was yet made as to Miss Welsh visiting her and the home of Carlyle's father. Carlyle dreaded the meeting, not of Miss Welsh and his mother, but of the two mothers! Wisely, perhaps, the two never did meet till marriage had taken place, and both were alike interested in making the most of it.

During his holiday at Mainhill he lay out on the hills day-dreaming, watching the bright blue Solway sea stretching in front of him, viewing Skiddaw and Helvellyn and Hartfell and Whitecombe, the Kirk and Repentance Tower, sometimes glimpsing perhaps the faint blue Isle of Man—in a word, revelling in one of the finest panoramas in the world: the Border and Cumberland hills and Paul Jones' Solway, with their "old mountains lying in the clear sleep of twilight, stirless as death, pure as disembodied spirits or floating like cerulean islands, while the white vapours of the morning have hidden all the lower earth."

"They are my own mountains." The proud, patriotic love of them, deep in that songless but poetic heart of his, bursts out in the words. Carlyle was a great poet, and would have been perhaps a great verse-writer had Providence willed and he had married a less mocking spirit. Is it not ominous that towards the end of the letter to Miss Welsh of April 1824, in which he writes these last-quoted words, he adds the mockery of "But, bless me! the sweet youth is growing quite poetical." One can overhear the very accents of Jane Welsh as clearly as he imagined them when he wrote these words. She at least could never be a poet, though she might write verse. "The mind is wanting," as Lamb told

Wordsworth when the latter thought he could write as well as Shakespeare "if he had a mind to.' Once, much later, she did write poetry from her own sad experience, after she had gained what imagination can never yield or light mockery confer—Sincerity.

There was no railway in these days and coach-journeying was expensive, tedious, and fatiguing. Carlyle made up his mind to go by sea from Leith, then the best mode of travelling from Scotland to London. To do this, he must return to Edinburgh; from Edinburgh he would proceed to Leith, and thence by steamboat to London. Boats sailed frequently, but there were very few steamboats. The other method available to him at Mainhill, a route by which later on and till the railway to Carlisle or Dumfries had been built his wife and he generally travelled, was *via* Annan by steamboat to Liverpool, and thence by coach to London, *via* Birmingham or Stratford-on-Avon by four or five alternative coach journeys.

But "the worthy people," he wrote his mother, "would not let me leave Haddington," otherwise, "by dint of great efforts," he would (by the time he was writing) have been in London by the Wednesday steamboat. He was reduced to a "handsome smack with four fellow-passengers," and "hoped to be there in a week." "About ten or twelve days after this the Coach will bring you a letter." Such were the "delays" of more peaceful ages. Eight hours is now the time taken by railway from Edinburgh to London, and the world is perhaps the happier that "distance" has been thus far annihilated as much as it has been rendered safer, uglier, and smokier.

Carlyle carried with him a letter from Brewster to "Thomas Campbell, Esq.," the poet who had once starved in London and now lorded it in literature, as stern and hard as he should have been gentler and more kindly to suffering "underlings." He had another letter addressed to Telford, "for whom he did not care two doits." He had Boyd's cheque for £180, "payable at sight in London," in his pocket.

His arrival in London and in Irving's house, to which he went as guest, have been pictured for us in his "Reminiscences of Edward Irving" as his own observing eyes saw it, vividly and brightly, nearly a century ago. The publication of these Reminiscences has been heavily censured, but with that we have no concern. If we object to that we must refrain from reading them. Their entire value lies in their sincerity. They are as Carlyle wrote them *not* for publication. Had any one edited them, we can see they would have been valueless for ever, and not as Carlyle wrote them. We may be thankful no one did, and we owe it to Froude no one did it. He had full authority from Carlyle, and that he granted authority redounds to Carlyle's honour, as it entailed much unfair treatment for Froude and a little far-off excitement among the maligned or photographed "victims" written of.

But Carlyle's life need have little concern with the allusions to Montagus, Bullers, and Stracheys, which created such anger among the legal and natural representatives of the "originals." Merely as they influenced Carlyle are they worthy of place beside him, arranged, skied, cellared, or "on the line," in strict

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relation to the extent of that influence, and for no other reason.

Irving and Irving's wife and household were waiting to welcome him from the North, and very evidently Irving's house was one of the most hospitable ever man stayed in as guest, full of interesting and (at this time) wealthy folk who gathered round the all-conquering "Orator." Concerning one subject Carlyle tells us nothing. Did he tell Irving how things stood between Miss Jane Welsh and himself? For while he stayed with Irving, a matter of three weeks at least, he was writing diligently to Haddington and telling her all he was able to tell about Irving and his establishment.

Irving, of course, was at the height of his popularity, a new broom sweeping clean. He was full of high hopes, flattered by every one, vain and with vanity, as it were, justified, popular, eager and curious but very easily duped, the prey of the scoundrels and the stern if affectionate shepherd of his flock. Carlyle records that Irving thought so highly of all men he could not believe the tales he heard to their discredit. He relates how, along with himself, Irving once confronted a publisher of his acquaintance as to whether, in making out the author's account, he charged the author falsely, or the exact sum the printer charged himself—with stupefying results according to Carlyle, and much uneasy wriggling on the part of his publishing friend. Irving was guileless, and such a man has no chance in the guileful atmosphere of London. But Irving's ruin was rather the result of his own temperament. He believed so crudely what he wished to believe, so innocently yet so vainly, that imagination



or emotion or superstition finally dethroned reason altogether.

Irving's house had been furnished in completeness and elegance largely through the liberality and generosity of Mrs. Strachey (Mrs. Buller's relative), through whom indirectly Carlyle had obtained his tutorship, and of Mrs. Strachey's cousin, a Miss Kitty Kirkpatrick, a young lady of romantic history and ancestry, daughter of an Anglo-Indian Civil Servant and a well-born wealthy "Begum," who had fallen in love with each other, and had lived in strict seclusion in consequence, "in an Indian paradise." Carlyle relates with affectionate detail his first glimpse of the sprightly Kitty of the mingled ancestry, and even what became of her eventually. In Irving's house, to which she had, apparently, entry like a daughter of the house, as her mother had by her right as the fairy patroness of its elegance, he saw her driving royally up, entering, and lightly reaching down to detach the loose luggage label from his own modest travelling trunk; as he sagely remarks, with the view doubtless of showing it to Mrs. Strachey, as proof of the arrival "of *the* Mr. Carlyle," whose praises Irving had so often besung.

Carlyle and she "made friends" very quickly, and it is easy to note that Carlyle was fascinated on his part, even though he was easily restrained by conscience and memory. Mrs. Strachey knew nothing at this time of his engagement to Miss Welsh, and herself would have liked much to see her "darling Kitty" (who was so fatally handicapped by the "romance" of her parents) married or engaged to be married to one so good as Carlyle, with so promis-

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ing a career in front of him. Carlyle notes this himself, in explanation perhaps of the French tour which followed, when the two young people were so much together. Some foolish Carlyle worshippers have detected in her the real "Blumine"! but Carlyle's own words preclude that notion, as well as his own preoccupation with Miss Welsh and his attachment to her. Yet, if he wrote to Haddington concerning her, there need be little doubt that Miss Welsh read the information anxiously, and considered it in all its bearings, and would be glad to have Carlyle back again.

In these "Reminiscences of Irving" Carlyle recalls the elders and worthies he met, the Scots merchants and tradesmen who were office-bearers and staunch supporters of Irving's Hatton Garden régime: Sir Peter Laurie, a forgotten civic dignitary of the day, who "cut" Carlyle, and regretted it later; and he even passes into reflections on Captain Grant (of Speke and Grant, exploration of the sources of the Nile fame), who by marrying Sir Peter's niece finally acquired all Sir Peter's hoarded wealth. Carlyle was ever curious and alert on all such matters, as on steamboats too, and the credit for their invention, first in Scotland by Burns's landlord, and secondly (in curious consequence) by his gardener, who thus handed over all the good and gain from it to the more daring enterprise of America. Carlyle would have made an uncommonly "instructive" journalist, had he cared to undertake the preparation of "articles" for family reading and fireside use. But Carlyle unflinchingly stuck to writing his best and worthiest and rejected all temptations to earn money

thus easily, but for him (with his brains) wastefully. Till long after he had written *Sartor* and his brilliant essays of solid gold, the world persistently invited Carlyle to restrict himself to such things, and almost at the last forced himself to believe it was what he ought to do, since it meant instant income and possibly respectable fame. It is well for the world Carlyle believed in himself, for hardly another did so.

Mr. Strachey, an "Examiner" of the Indian Civil Service under the Company, a "genially abrupt man" and a wealthy one, lived at Shooter's Hill, than which Carlyle had "seldom seen a pleasanter place"; and to this house, and the company gathered there, Carlyle became a frequent visitor, firstly as friend of Irving, and latterly in his own right. Mrs. Strachey, whom he affectionately and gratefully remembers as "a singular pearl of a woman, pure as dew yet full of love, incapable of unverity to himself or others," "took to me from the first, and never swerved." Kitty he has preserved as one of the brightest existences he was ever to meet. So keenly had he observed her (for **all** the fascination of the lady in Haddington) **as** to portray her thus minutely: "Of developed **intellect** she had not much, though not wanting in **discernment**: amiable, affectionate, graceful: might **be** called attractive, not slim enough for the title '**pretty**,' not tall enough for '**beautiful**'; had **something** low-voiced, languidly harmonious, placid, **sensuous**: loved perfumes, etc.: a half-Begum: in **short**, an interesting specimen of the semi-Oriental **Englishwoman**. She had one of the prettiest smiles,

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a visible sense of humour; the slight merry curl of her upper lip (right side of it only), the carriage of her head and eye on such occasions, the quiet little things she said in that kind, and her low-toned hearty laugh were noticeable." Did ever fascinating girl meeting quiet, shy, silent young admirer earn a more masterly and brilliantly "authentic" likeness? No photographer of the days to come could hope to surpass Carlyle in bringing before people the lineaments of his "sitters."

Related to the Bullers and Stracheys, and, like them, drawing vast revenues from distant India, were the Montagus, concerning whom the too-observant Carlyle has written much that pained and irritated even distant surviving relations long after his own death. Mr. Basil Montagu was "a Chancery Barrister in excellent practice." Admittance to his house followed as a consequence of the others, all of course at this time open and free to Carlyle as the friend of Irving rather than by any acquired fame of his own or right arising from work achieved. He was abundantly able to retain their friendship after Irving passed out of their circle and entered deep waters, but he would never have acquired it, in the first place, but for that generous friend.

Carlyle was having what is known as a "good time," meeting distinguished men, frequenting houses far beyond any he had yet been accustomed to, meeting "likely" publishers and editors, seeing the sights, invited to evening dinners and receptions, or attending concerts and lectures under the very best and most luxurious auspices, in the society often of the wealthy, the rich, and the open-handed. He was

becoming more and more indebted to Irving, and in spite of the "patronage" he had said "he would not tolerate" while in Kinnaird, he must now confess he was enjoying all the advantages the patron could confer, and so generously did confer.

He was prouder (one would have said) than this could profess to prove. It is not quite clear who paid for the French tour, but the chances are Mr. Strachey did, and unless Carlyle insisted on paying his own expenses (of which there is no record) it is conformable to the usual arrangement of such occasions that Mr. Strachey paid the entire cost of the tour. Is it consistent? Does the Carlyle who refused a loan from Jeffrey, and many other well-meant offers from very well-meaning and even famous people, appear the same Carlyle as the man who accepted the wealth of strangers, whether in the form of entertainment, maintenance, coach tickets, and other travelling expenses, as possibly he did now as we shall soon see, and in later life when certainly he went gladly and gratefully to the country homes of the nobility who admired him? He does not; and here is perhaps a common but in many cases, as in his, a venial weakness. Carlyle's wife took, it is to be inferred, a far graver view of it, less to her husband's credit.

It must not be forgotten that Miss Kitty was fascinating, and Carlyle, like most young men, liked to be flattered by attentions paid to him as a "coming man." Some of the days out at Shooter's Hill must have been very enjoyable, if scarcely likely to further his highest self or even gain Miss Welsh's approbation.

But in the *Reminiscences* Carlyle is bitter when speaking of the Montagus. There can be no other impression formed in the mind even of the careless reader. Like Mrs. Strachey herself and Mrs. Buller, Mrs. Montagu (Basil's *third* wife) was a highly esteemed friend of Carlyle for many years, a kindly, benignant, much-worried lady who was very kind to him at this time. Mr. Montagu was *her* second husband, and Mrs. Montagu, ladylike, even haughty as she appeared, had been the governess of her husband's children, of the two "lots" or families he already possessed. To Montagu and herself had been born two sons in addition, which made three "lots," and she had had, by *her* first husband, a daughter (a Miss Skepper) who lived with her—four "lots," or families, under the one capable, clever lady, governing all of them! Clearly a lady to be sympathised with, and for ever gratefully remembered by any one who accepted kindnesses at her hands.

Among the kindred likes shared between her and Carlyle was a strong mutual love and admiration of Burns, whom the lady had once seen. To her Carlyle was indebted for valuable retrospective glimpses of the appearance of the fascinating poet. Another of her generous, trouble-taking kindnesses was to take him and Irving out to Highgate to see Coleridge, and be introduced (Carlyle at least) to him. Probably Carlyle resented her taking him, and would have preferred Irving alone to have done so. But the Carlyle letters which Mrs. Montagu's granddaughter published in defence of her relative after the *Reminiscences* had been given to the world as protest against the savage bludgeoning and rapier-

thrusting of these "Irving" recollections of his, prove conclusively that at this time (and much more for a year or so after marriage) Carlyle regarded and addressed her as one who had laid him under considerable obligations by helping with her social influence and still more kind, helpful counsel. There is a tremendous, a notable difference (not to Carlyle's credit) between the tone of those grateful early letters of his and the bitter almost savage recapitulation of family discomfort related in connection with her name which he has dragged into the *Reminiscences*, to which they are nearly if not quite irrelevant, and written down when he was filled with unreasoning and remorseful sorrow for his dead wife. What is the explanation? For as affecting Carlyle, the charge cannot be that he "published" the *Reminiscences*. He did not. The charge is that he wrote them. How came a man otherwise never vindictive to write such unpardonable memoirs? Is this the reward, the other side of the medal, of the "patronage of genius" Carlyle trounced the world for?

No heavier charge can be laid against Carlyle than this; for cruelty or thoughtless wrong-doing to his wife is really far less condemnatory than this of post-mortem, sleepless contempt and almost relentless detraction. There were many considerations in the case of the wife which throw a flood of light on the offence and reduce it to the vanishing point of thinnest shadow. The other seems to stand black and unrelieved by any ray of excusing or all-illuminating light.

That is our only reason for dragging the poor lady into his biography or any partial survey of his life. If she was a good influence and acknowledged

aid to him, to omit her were only to cover up an offence, since she stands in the *Reminiscences* curiously large and impressive for the contemptuous treatment she procures; while his contemporary letters acknowledge her influence. Moreover, there is the eternal question of justice. Why does Carlyle recall her so bitterly? Did the lady deserve to be so regarded? Did she injure Carlyle later, so that one can forgive his bitterness? Or was Carlyle guilty of a grave wrong?

One thing she did do which Froude points out: she wrote, as we shall find, well-meaning if foolish and sentimental letters to Miss Welsh when first she heard of her engagement to Carlyle, which revealed to Miss Welsh two things: firstly, that Irving had told Mrs. Montagu about his love for herself; and secondly, that Mrs. Montagu was under the impression that Miss Welsh was still "passionately" but hopelessly in love with Irving, married man though he was! Miss Welsh was furious. She promptly sent the letters to Carlyle. Froude argues quite correctly that this circumstance made Carlyle's marriage inevitable and imperative, but other critics have seen fit to combat the notion furiously, with the usual charge against Froude of "deliberate malice."

It does not affect the point at issue here, however; because Carlyle wrote *kindly* letters to Mrs. Montagu after marriage as well as before. He had not then assumed his later tone of vindictive remembrance. He had assumed it in autumn 1866, when he sat down in his own desolate home to recall reminiscences of Edward Irving and his dead wife.



The conjecture is not far-fetched that the probable reason is not any inexplicable, sudden hatred on Carlyle's part, but that, full of desire to placate the memory of the beloved dead, to please her unconscious shade, he identified himself more and more with the sentiments and feelings and thoughts which had been hers and to which she had given consistent expression. It is characteristic of him in late life to praise whatever she had praised, to dislike what she had disliked, and even to modify his own sentiments to make them appear in complete harmony with hers. In truth it was a very probable way for Carlyle to pay penance to love and care, which he now realised had really been lavished by the dead woman on his unresponsive or unrecognising self.

Mrs. Carlyle never forgave Mrs. Montagu, and very early in the joint career she succeeded in cutting that lady out of Carlyle's never too-grateful memory by persistent slow depreciation, in the immemorial fashion of the weak woman bent on bending the self-willed but loving husband; won him out of all public mention of Mrs. Montagu or private talk of her, out of their "visiting and calling list," out of their lives. She always refers to the lady scornfully as a self-seeking worldling; in short, she cannot for a moment forget that one impulsive act of hers. It seems to prove Froude right. If ever she regretted her marriage to Carlyle, even for a moment; if ever she felt the burden beyond her strength, as apparently she often did, and oftener told foolish sympathetic friends—she blamed Mrs. Montagu for it all. Froude had the highest regard for Mrs. Carlyle, regarding her as a lost genius. Froude would probably be surprised at

the use here made of her admitted occasional regret that she had married Carlyle, or at least occasional use of language which leaves but the one inference; but Froude's facts themselves provide the argument. If Carlyle felt that his wife had suffered from her marriage, and was eager to prove his unfailing love for her always, he must have been more eager than ever after her death to homologate even her prejudices, dislikes, and hatreds. The saint can do no wrong, and to Carlyle his wife had become a saint. In the unbalanced condition of his mind, his heart cast out his reason and his mental discrimination. The *Reminiscences* afford pathetic proof both of the hagiolatry overruling his reason and his anxious, pathetic anxiety to identify himself with the saint in every least detail.

Carlyle saw many celebrities besides Coleridge while on this first London visit. Coleridge himself he transferred to the pages of *John Sterling*, and the portraiture has preserved the book to a longer "immortality," to adopt the fondly exaggerative phrase of this Age of Literature. His letters (of years prior to that of this visit) reveal a contempt for the "Lake philosophy," though in *Schiller* he had been less contemptuous of Kant and his works. He had then exempted Schiller (and by implication Coleridge), but he is scornful beyond his wont in this famous production of his pencil-pen. The portrait is a caricature, and indeed revealed as such by another even harsher among the men he met at this time and some years later, by his cruel presentment of Charles Lamb, whose loving allegiance to Coleridge is one of the priceless treasures of literature and poor human life.

Carlyle's only excuse is his honesty. He honestly disliked Lamb's work, which unfortunately he had scarcely read. He judged as his keen observing eyes saw and he tells what he saw, plus what he felt and thought. It is the glory of Carlyle that he could do this so well. When he is inspired by love or kindly interest, the portraiture of Carlyle is the delight of all men; when inspired by dislike or hate, it can only be the delight of such men as share those feelings. Naturally his skill was not popular; but the reason for our dislike is not any want of morality or lack of greatness or artistic mastery on Carlyle's part but our knowledge that he is unjust through ignorance. In Lamb's case, however, there is reason to believe his wife's sharp criticism was really the disturbing cause, and it falls to be treated in a later period. The entire incident has been misunderstood and the relative positions of the parties forgotten. Lamb's failings cannot be overlooked entirely. It is just, and helps to make us believe in a God to reflect that Lamb, who so often tried the patience of his best friends and was often told he was "giving himself away" to the company, did at least once find out that God was not unmindful of his giving himself unworthily away, that there was in one of these companies one who would bring him to book—for no very dreadful crime after all. The sin of Ham is a question of degree. Save for the one special and worst degree for which Ham was punished—very far from possible to Carlyle!—our moralist was constantly inclined to this sin of the "unco guid" in all cases where he despised the "unfortunate." He uncovers his brothers. But then how nobly too did

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Carlyle strive to prevent brothers being unjustly uncovered by other people. The good side wipes out all the shame of the evil. Nor ought we in justice to forget that Lamb was a spoilt favourite of the magazines at a time when poor Carlyle could hardly get one of these to admit *him*.

Rogers, the banker-poet or poet-banker rather, he met also at the Montagus' house, as also Crabbe Robinson and Procter (Barry Cornwall), engaged then to Miss Skepper (Mrs. Montagu's daughter), who afterwards very nobly, after long silent "putting off" through sudden undeserved loss of income and the defalcations of an attorney, married her. He met Hazlitt also, the brilliant essayist and erratic friend whom Carlyle says "was not admitted now," but whom he confessed to "a curiosity about." Perhaps he wished to report specially to Haddington about Hazlitt. Allan Cunningham, whom he "took to" at once, "most dear, kind, modest, good-natured Allan," with his "Annandale accent as though he had never crossed the Border," in this respect so like himself,—as doubtless Miss Welsh remarked,—was another. Carlyle met at the house of the Montagus all who were to be seen in London of distinguished literary "celebrities" in these months of 1824. He wrote home long letters descriptive of them, and of London and its historical sights. How grandly he figures St. Paul's for them, rising high and Heaven-pointing, silent and dignified and serene amid all the din and bustle of the pigmies toiling and quarrelling at the foot of it; and Westminster Abbey with its silent august memories. With Miss Welsh he compared criticisms of literary leaders, for her he drew

some of his most faithful portraits of them, for her and himself he eagerly embraced the good things Irving put in his way. For Irving's goodness lay behind all this.

Poet Thomas Campbell the now-forgotten, whom in his earliest letters he praised so extravagantly, to whom he had carried so thankfully and hopefully Brewster's letter of introduction, he doubtless discovered had not the least intention of helping Carlyle, or any other person, and was a broken reed for a struggling author to look to. "He is as heartless as a little Edinburgh advocate." He, "the little advocate," can only be Jeffrey who all unknowingly had kept the "Theory of Gravitation" skit, and never even showed signs of having received it! Carlyle never forgot injuries. Acutely Carlyle discerns the same prospect in Campbell, and the portrait of the poet "with the smirk of an auctioneer" lacks nothing in vivacity, or truthful if contemptuous likeness. The artist, however, has a grudge, and has practically confessed it in the "heartless little Edinburgh advocate." Campbell's wife even comes in for her share; her face being "symmetrical but vulgar," and her speech "that accursed Celtic or Highland accent." Carlyle is a Lowlander, with all the prejudice and unfairness, and much of the old traditional fear for the cattle-lifting Highlander the civilised peasant Lowlander possessed.

Carlyle's first London visit was a notable one, and he was amazingly fortunate for one in his position to be introduced on such terms to the literary figures of the day. In order of time the French tour Carlyle so fortunately was enabled to achieve should

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now be dealt with ; but it is more convenient to leave it to a later chapter, while we proceed to relate how this tutorship of the young Bullers, which had brought him where he was and was the direct gift of Irving, came to an untimely end.

The Bullers had not yet fixed on another residence, and, to Mrs. Buller's growing dislike, Carlyle let it be seen plainly he would only *extend* his services as tutor if the place of residence chosen was such as suited himself. He could not be depended on to go everywhere, and unfortunately Mrs. Buller could not decide for a long time, for whatever reason, whether to live in London, Cornwall, or Boulogne. It was vexing for Carlyle, and he felt himself injured by her vacillation. Perhaps too he judged they were acting now more carelessly towards him, and he imagined Mrs. Buller "full up" (as the slang phrase more expressively terms it) with his idiosyncrasies, physical ailments, and special cooking requirements. Perhaps she was. It is not quite to be wondered at, as Carlyle indeed confessed.

Carlyle was very haughty to people paying him money and "hiring" his services. He had never been disciplined, as the lawyer or business man is in an office. He had never "assisted," as a young minister or doctor has so frequently to do, placing themselves for the time under tutelage, as it were. This was Carlyle's first and only instance of the sort and he took ill to it. He was not backward in showing it. Again and again he had shown the Bullers he was quite ready to wash his hands of his employment, and would certainly do so if his health seemed to require that, or a residence were chosen where he

could not work profitably at his own trade of literature.

Perhaps so many calm, careless epistles and conversations produced their inevitable effect, and Mrs. Buller, who had at first dreaded Carlyle's departure from Charles's side, had attained by this time to greater confidence in her boy's stability and considered that departure more complacently. Charles was now almost ready for Cambridge and must shortly proceed thither. In any event the Bullers seemed not so eager. Charles (Carlyle believed) was amply able to take care of himself. Good friends they had always been, and remained close friends now—in itself a welcome proof of Carlyle's goodness and kindness as well as of his affection for his temporary charges, his popularity among the better and more talented young men of his country and his attraction for others.

Charles pled for a longer tutelage under him, but suddenly and while nothing definite could be ascertained, Mrs. Buller wrote to Carlyle asking him to let them know "at once" whether he could accompany them to France: if he could not, Charles was to be sent to prepare for Cambridge; if he could, they were both to go to Royston (a place some fifty miles away) to prepare for the further journey. Perhaps provokingly, Carlyle answered that the stipulated time for deciding had scarcely arrived, but that, if an immediate answer must be given, he could only decline and say he could not go. The two met in town next day, and the result Carlyle announced to his mother immediately in words which reveal how chagrined, angry, and ill-tempered he was over the

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unexpected consequence of being taken at his word. He did not expect they would have let him go. Such non-expectation has ruined many a statesman, and a host of others besides. It threw him out considerably (one suspects), but he soon recovered his temper. If he meant to work at literature it may have been for the best. So he was thinking soon after, and very wisely.

He knew the struggle for bread must now become keener. Perhaps he was hoping to marry at no distant date, and may have lamented the loss of the money more than he confessed. Yet when poor young Charles pressed up to him the next time the two met (at the laying of the foundation stone of the new church which Irving's success had necessitated) and almost with tears implored him to return, Carlyle refused with considerable regret that he must now lose the boy's frank, free companionship. To a man like Carlyle there is no looking back. The die had been cast and Carlyle ceased to be a tutor. Incidentally he ceased also to be earning two hundred pounds a year, clear wages, and to be maintained in luxurious fashion in the houses of the great. Yet he had formed many friendships, and he was to reap reward from the circumstance. It was the beginning of July 1824, and a notable decision must now be made. What was he to do?



## CHAPTER XI

### THE VISIT TO LONDON (*continued*)—FIRST VISIT TO PARIS, OCTOBER 1824

AT the moment he left the agreeable and financially helpful employment which had carried him prosperously through more than a year already and had introduced him to many valuable friendships, Carlyle was in London, and the never-failing friendship and counsel of Irving were at hand. Carlyle himself was not disposed to be down-hearted, for his circumstances had improved greatly since the dreary time in Edinburgh which had preceded the tutorship. Irving's kindness had brought about Carlyle's admission to the *London Magazine*, and Taylor the publisher was now considering the republication of the magazine articles which (in three parts) had already appeared there, the whole to be the first *Life of Schiller* in English, at a time, too, when there was hardly any biography of that poet in Germany itself. There was a "demand." Carlyle was by far the best living writer in England to inform his countrymen concerning German or foreign writers, but Carlyle had far loftier ideas of himself than as mere translator of names so august even as those of Goethe and Schiller. There was a demand for German literature, and Carlyle reckoned with perfect justice that he could at least keep the pot

boiling by translation work. For the first time he felt hopeful.

In Edinburgh, too, Boyd the publisher was even then publishing *Wilhelm Meister*, the £180 for the first edition of which lay now in his pocket. At Mainhill he knew his own family were reading it at that very moment, and Miss Welsh was doing the same at Haddington. Miss Welsh did not like the book, but the Mainhill folk did. The book was selling well as matter of fact, though De Quincey had written a contemptuous review of it in one of the magazines — contemptuous apparently of the novel itself rather than the mere translator. But all was one to Carlyle, and he noted the fact. So did De Quincey later, for according to Carlyle (when those two met a year or two after) De Quincey “fought shy” of him, and was very uneasy,—a palpable exaggeration, since De Quincey really had exposed his incapacity to understand Goethe, and Carlyle was not very much concerned. Carlyle, however, never forgot, as John Stuart Mill and others were to learn, unfortunately for all concerned.

The *Schiller* in book form, Taylor promised, would be out shortly. In a letter to his brother Carlyle mentions that “Taylor and Henry pay me somewhere on the verge of £90 down on the nail for this book the day it is published.” He had already been paid for the “Parts” in the magazine, and of course he did not sell the book outright. The “pay” is poorer than in the *Meister* case, where the work (except in the Preface) was not nearly so fine. Here (as *not* in *Meister*) for the first time Carlyle was himself, and from it naturally he had higher expectations.

Carlyle had no guide whatever, nor was there any confidence-giving contemporary English critic, agreement with whom might have raised his belief in himself. When Carlyle criticised *The Robbers*, *Wallenstein*, and *Mary Stuart* of Schiller he was in the fortunate but lonely position of being pioneer, a tremendous advantage to a strong mind like his, but one requiring bravery and deep study alike. Miss Welsh clearly expected much from *Schiller*. As Froude remarks, she expected it would make Carlyle's fortune and fame at once. She formed the most extravagant hopes. Carlyle partly shared these, and he had every justification.

He could rest on his oars then for a little at least, and, with money in his pocket, with the finest, most refined, even luxurious society in London (in the shape of three fashionable mansions at least, Mrs. Montagu's, Mrs. Strachey's, and Mrs. Buller's), with Irving, and the more prosperous and wealthier of his office-bearers virtually at his command and free to him, Carlyle was very well disposed to rest in London for a little, even though Miss Welsh was eagerly looking for his return, and he was often inclined to be with her. But Carlyle was the most industrious of correspondents, and he kept her informed of everything, and she dreamed pleasant dreams of his coming greatness.

Among other guests whom he had met in Irving's hospitable and at this time crowded home was a certain Dr. Badams, a Birmingham dyer or chemical manufacturer, as also a graduate in Medicine, who had a turn for invention and for applying inventions to trade. Badams was then in receipt of a large income

from his patents and his chemical works : supposed to be "rapidly realising a fortune," which alas ! was never to be fulfilled. Carlyle was certainly never any the worse of "cures," undergone at the homes of medical-gentlemen friends, but bad luck, or worse, attended both the medical gentlemen who befriended Carlyle ! not, however, through him or with the least relation to him.

Dr. Badams had been a sufferer from stomachic woes, and apparently (as was very natural) he and Carlyle had eagerly embraced the opportunity of their introduction to discuss (each his own) symptoms in the world-old fashion of sufferers in all ages. Dr. Badams "knew the very thing," had passed through "the same identical disease" and had cured it ! Drugs were of little use, said Badams, though he also would prescribe a few simple ones, and diet and proper exercise were the only remedies worth naming. The Doctor was a hospitable, well-read man, wealthy and generous, not averse to becoming the patron of suffering genius. He was besides a bachelor, and had an ample residence, tenantless practically, near his factory in Birmingham, to which he invited Carlyle for one month, the length of time necessary in the Doctor's opinion for a cure on the Badams principle.

Invitations of this sort come seldom in the life of any man. Few receive them, and the receipt of them must be considered not only as a proof of the benefactor's kindness, and good luck on the part of the benefited, but also as practical proof of the fascination exercised by the latter. Men do not ask surly, ill-tempered boors to be house-guests. Generous as

they are, they look forward to enjoyment and delightful conversation with their guests to repay them in a way for the inconvenience occasioned.

Carlyle spent July and August 1824 with Badams, riding his horses, visiting the factories, the neighbouring furnaces and smelting works of the Birmingham black country and the mechanical triumphs to be seen thereabouts, avoiding his genial host when he wished to be alone, charily granting his company (he reflected), at the best, kindly treated, well nursed; in short, he put himself very much in his generous host's debt. All honour to men like Dr. Badams! for they get no reward but the very questionable honour of mention by the "great men" whom they seek to help. Sometimes men of this kindly, genial sort wonder why they act so, and the world nursed on an utilitarian creed wonders still more.

Two months were so spent, and Carlyle must have derived benefit to his health as he did also to his intelligence, by this view at close quarters under expert guidance of industrial England and the grand historical region of which Birmingham is now a railway centre. Stratford and Kenilworth and Warwick are not far away. Leamington is at hand. The rides and drives and journeys were vastly interesting. Badams was as interesting and entertaining as he was generous. The uninfluential Scots student, translator of *Meister* and author of the *Life of Schiller*, was being treated by one Englishman at least, and many others in London, as well as the *great* Carlyle was ever entertained at the height of his fame! It must have been very pleasant and grateful to him. If Carlyle was independent, he was

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not averse to accepting extremely valuable favours from men who were total strangers to his name a month before. The young man who affects a misanthropic, jealously independent air, scornful of alluring invitations, under the delusion that such a disposition is Carlylean, has read Carlyle's life hastily.

Dr. Badams' drugs, however, proved too much for him, mild as they now appear. Castor oil every fourth day does not seem very dreadful, but Carlyle states it with a "Did ye ever hear the like?" air. Late in September he returned to London by coach and again took up his abode with his staunch friend Irving.

The coach passed through Stratford, and Carlyle was a keen observer. He has preserved for us a picture of Shakespeare's house as it was in 1824. "I saw Stratford-on-Avon," he tells his brother John, "the very hills and woods which the boy Shakespeare had looked upon, the very Church where his dust reposes, nay, the very house where he was born: the threshold over which his staggering footsteps carried him in infancy: the very stones where the urchin played marbles and flogged tops. It is a small grimy-looking house of brick, bound as was of old the fashion with beams of oak intersecting the bricks, which are built into it and fill up its interstices as the glass does in a window." (There surely spoke the voice of the mason's son.) "The old tile roof is cast by age and twisted into all varieties of curvature. Half the house has been modernised and made a butcher's shop." Farther on the coach route led to Oxford, "with its domes and spires and minarets, its rows of shady trees, and still monastic edifices in their

antique richness and intricate seclusion!" Carlyle knew the secret of Oxford, but never felt its charm. Like all Scots students, trained in the Scots (which is the medieval-Continental) University fashion, he preferred the isolated, bleak independence of the latter system to the dreamy reliance on the past which is the characteristic of the English University system.

One can scarcely read Carlyle's letters to his most cherished or dearest friends without noting that here (long before his published literary work) first appears the undoubted Carlylean power of graphic minute description. In his letters are to be found, as here of Oxford and in previous ones of literary London, some of his finest word pictures, his clean-cut etched portraits and caricatures, some of the phrases even which later he forced into literature and world circulation.

One reads concerning R. L. Stevenson, another splendid writer, that he diligently practised literary expression in penny notebooks which he carried on his person, "sedulously apeing" there the great writers of the past, each in turn. Every literary man must practise and "learn the trick" somehow, somewhere. No literary genius springs at a bound into the perfect expression of his thought. Carlyle's training-ground is to be seen in his letters. There first, naturally and inevitably, he adopts the hereditary style of his father, which was in his blood, the graphic, minutely descriptive "take-off," humorous presentment, or pithy, apt, clinching expression; bringing it more and more to perfection there. The *Encyclopædia* articles were written in an assumed and (for Carlyle) stilted fashion, visibly formed on weighty models and artificial. *Schiller* is less so; but it also is written in the best

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English style of the period—not Carlyle's own. The *Essays* show transition ; wherein he shows that he is already aware of the superiority of his own style, yet shrinks from prolonged use of it. In *Sartor* first did he adopt from beginning to end his natural epistolary style. Himself has told us he recognised it as his father's style done into literature.

Very wisely he perceived that it was not the affectation his critics loudly declared it to be. It was genuine and unalterable for good or evil. He could never have forced himself with advantage to write in the best style of those who had gone before him. This was what he meant by his wise advice to young literary aspirants, to allow the style to take care of itself : that a man could not help expressing himself in his own way, which for him was the best.

Critics laughed at him. But Carlyle was right from his own experience. He fell into, or stumbled on his own natural style, framed and fashioned unconsciously in the enormous number of letters he had written to his friends throughout the formative period of his life. Carlyle never kept his choice phrases and brilliant "purple passages" for his "next article." He wrote few or no "articles." But he was exercising himself every day, in every letter he wrote. If writers, even Stevenson himself, had written as many letters, with equal determination to express themselves there to the best advantage and regardless of time and trouble, they would have had no need of penny notebooks or youthful articles, but like Carlyle would have come into their own,—not without effort but without conscious exercise of "style." On reflection the reader will discover too that Carlyle pauses and



punctuates as in a letter; that as in a letter he is generally *talking* to his reader rather than writing to him.

Carlyle left Birmingham for many reasons: one presumably was the length of time already spent at the entire cost of a stranger, the other that he had received an invitation from Mrs. Strachey (through Irving) to go to Dover with them and recruit there. Mrs. Strachey was Irving's Lady Bountiful, with full purse and generous giving heart. She was only too glad to be allowed to finance Irving for house-furnishing and holidays to the seaside and for gifts innumerable. Not only Irving but Irving's entourage, and very specially including Carlyle whom the good lady loved, and would have liked perhaps to see married to "Kitty" her pretty cousin. Miss Kirkpatrick was young, pretty and fascinating, and she had ample means for both. It mattered nothing that Carlyle was poor, since he was the man he was and money was the least requirement in the fortunate young lady's quest of a husband, or Mrs. Strachey's quest in her cause.

Carlyle at first was undecided whether to go with Irving and the rest of them to Dover. He meant to stay in London for a little, but he felt he ought to be in rooms of his own and not always indebted to the eager and willing Irving. He talked it over with Irving and discovered that the great-hearted fellow was actually proposing, or had proposed to Carlyle that he should board with him all the winter as honoured, non-paying guest, while all the time he had received an offer (financially most helpful) from some Glasgow merchant with a proposal that the merchant's

son (a medical student) should board with Irving while attending his classes. The remuneration was very large and the offer was flattering as well as welcome. Irving would not reveal the truth at first, but Carlyle wrested it from him, and at once very naturally told Irving he could not board with him, and would not hear another word on the subject.

Reluctantly Irving agreed, seizing the opportunity, however, of clinching the Dover proposal. Carlyle must in that event, he said, accompany him to Dover. Carlyle agreed, but stung to a knowledge of all he owed to Irving coupled with reflections that Irving, after all, had to take in boarders himself, he insisted on paying his own share of the expenses in the lodgings chosen for both Irving's family and himself. Carlyle half considered this "a piece of cold selfishness" and "salve to his own pride," but one wonders how he can have imagined any other arrangement all along, since Irving had notoriously no money and Mrs. Irving was no luckier. As matter of fact neither he nor Irving seem to have paid anything. Mrs. Strachey paid for everybody and everything. Carlyle seems to have had no objection to rich folk like the Stracheys paying, and his opinions are curious, not so independent as those of Burns (one fancies) had Burns been in his place, and Burns was by far the more pleasure-loving of the two.

Carlyle is at his worst relating experiences in a friend's house where he has been or actually is an honoured guest. Men often are. These are either gushingly grateful and flattering if they are insincere, or inclined to meanness if they are genuine but critical. The fact is, Carlyle never believed himself

indebted to any host. He would not have accepted the invitation had he thought so, yet by accepting it he became so. A very amusing and entirely "real" interview between himself and a young lady (apparently Mrs. Irving's sister) is related in a letter written to John from his London rooms. These he had found in the near neighbourhood of Irving's residence in the Pentonville quarter. "'Pray, Mr. Carlyle,' said she in a mincing, namby-pamby tone, the night she arrived, when I was sitting with my powers of persuasion screwed to the sticking-place, being in truth very miserable, and very much indisposed to make complaints—'Pray, Mr. Carlyle, are you *really* sick now, or is it only fanciful?' 'Fancy, ma'am, fancy—nothing more,' said I, half turning round and immediately proceeding with some other topic addressed to some other member of the company."

One infers that the company did sometimes get quite enough of the "sickness" and stomach-worries of poor Carlyle, and was not always so sympathetic as it might have been! Doubtless the young lady had been goaded to her sublime question by many overheard remarks as to its imaginary nature, so satisfactorily shunted the miseries topic for that evening at least. But she was marked, in fact rather rudely "ruled out" by the suffering one. One would not willingly lose such a picture, any more than Bozzy's query of Johnson, "What do you do with your orange-peel?"

To Dover all the friends went, the Stracheys, the Irvings, and Carlyle; and from a letter of Carlyle to his father we find that it is to the hospitable home of Mrs. Strachey they have gone. "A certain Miss

from his intended wife. He remained uncorrected all his life, though he was married for a period far longer than is usual. The tenderness, protective instinct, wise tolerance, and recognition of helplessness which fatherhood stimulates or arouses, were never to be roused in him as in less-favoured mortals. A certain harsh and Swiftian contempt for "forked radishes" remained characteristic to the end, yet with flashes of deep tenderness and almost miraculous insight, which showed how tender a heart was his after all.

Perhaps Miss Welsh was silent, however, in defence of matrimony from the peculiar circumstances, of which Carlyle was entirely ignorant, of her past relations to the man Carlyle was criticising. It needs no very deep knowledge of human nature to suspect that her feelings towards Irving were neither kindly nor flattering to that good and sincere friend of Carlyle. She abused him for his vanity, of which it must be confessed he had an excessive share. She loved to hear Carlyle, her lover whom she loved now, write his sarcastic "hits" at Irving's weaknesses. Since Irving (and very much more particularly Mrs. Irving) were the parties attacked she remained silent in defence of the institution and relationship indirectly attacked also. But even apart from this we must conclude she also contemplated her own "marriage" rather as a literary partnership, carried out in the only way convention and good morals permitted.

Some pleasant days at Dover followed the arrival of Carlyle. Mrs. Strachey's party roamed the sands reading Fletcher's *Purple Island*, we are told, when Carlyle and Miss Kirkpatrick were drawn together

closer than Miss Welsh would have liked. But the kindness of the Stracheys had not, even then, been exhausted. Mr. Strachey arrived also, France lay conveniently near, and a trip to Paris immediately suggested itself to him as one which would be very agreeable in such company. But Irving could not or would not, and the others "with one consent began to make excuse," or were not invited,—all but Miss Kirkpatrick and Carlyle. The oddity of the arrangement seems to prove the accuracy of Carlyle's hint as to the intentions and wishes of Mrs. Strachey towards him and the sprightly young heiress; but certainly the intentions did not suggest themselves to him at that time, otherwise one cannot think he would have agreed. Carlyle went, and we need make little doubt Irving and he chaffed hugely over the constitution of the little company.

For Carlyle the trip to Paris, made under such hospitable auspices, with Mr. Strachey paying perhaps all the expense and most certainly all the real expense of coach-hiring (which Carlyle would not for himself have required), this unexpected delightful little excursion to a city which seems always to have called him—"the city of revolutions"—was like the waving once more of a fairy godmother's wand. Carlyle was eager to see Paris, and he was young enough and light-hearted enough (for all his stomachic woes and castor oil "once in four days") to appreciate the delightful company thus lovingly almost thrust on him.

He was twenty-nine at this time. The figure he presented resembled the D'Orsay portrait, or perhaps (though it was taken fully twenty years later) the

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Maclise portrait, rather than the ill-dressed or odd and dishevelled photographs of his later years. D'Orsay exaggerated the dandy or maccaroni aspect, the fashionable cut of the clothes, the elegant waist, and tight pantaloons of the epoch. Carlyle can never have been a dandy, but we know from his own confession that he had already wisely perceived the necessity for fashionable clothes while in London. In Miss Kirkpatrick's society he must have appeared at his best. His little sister had remarked (long before) his neat and tidy habits with his clothes. He was tall and now full-grown, about five feet ten inches in height, thin, and carrying himself erect. His red cheeks belied internal disease, and must have afforded justification for the scoffers and hard-hearted "imaginary" folk, like the young lady he turned his back on. A broad, impressive forehead, well-formed nose, and tremulous mouth, his clean-shaven face, graceful and well-formed limbs, abundant unruly hair set off to advantage (as in more superlative degree in Disraeli's case) the mordant wit and sarcastic, sardonic humours which delighted the society he appeared in. At this time he might be excused vain fancies about himself. His reception by superior people, moving in society as good as any to be found in Edinburgh, and abounding in wealth and generosity, seemed to warrant his dreaming pleasant dreams of a ball already at his feet and of a world waiting to be conquered by Carlyle.

In 1824, Carlyle probably looked his best, though the world must ever continue to regard him not as he then appeared, but with the sad stoical world-weary face he wore when Lord Rector of Edinburgh

University, a father addressing his children,—the face of the photograph printed and published in the People's Edition of *Sartor*,—Carlyle as he appeared in 1866, or as the weary old man Whistler saw in him. In 1841 we shall find an acute observer (the Rev. Mr. Brookfield—Tennyson's "old Brooks, who loved to mouth my rhymes") noting that "Carlyle's face was like that portrait of Count d'Orsay's you have seen. But complexion very coarse, and general appearance 'solid in thick shoes.' As tall as I about—and certainly no less ungainly" (Brookfield was an exceptionally handsome man!), "a hearty laughter with discoloured teeth, very broad Scots—talks not unlike his writing" (here was an observing and accurate critic!) "unreserved, unaffected, of course, a leetle shy and awkward,—but very likeable."

All this would be as true or truer in 1824, and Miss Kitty Kirkpatrick was in luck's way indeed. Possibly, however, she did *not* understand, though she may have done, that Carlyle was already captivated, and by another.

Of course Carlyle, if no one else, would suggest the itinerary. He very definitely wished to see certain places, and we may be very sure he had resolved on his route, whichever the others adopted. They knew his worth and accepted his. The route was that suggested by Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, which also one would expect issued from Carlyle. He spoke no French, we are told, or none but a few phrases, but he could read it. Strachey spoke it in a fashion of his own. But perhaps Miss Kirkpatrick made up for deficiencies, though that does not appear.

Paris attracted the half-conscious Carlyle like a magnet. Already he had framed a tentative creed on its history. The hand of God had been visible to him in the French Revolution since first he understood it, at the very time that he had ceased to believe the narrative of God's dealings with Israel. He did not then realise he was to write its history and make the very stones of Paris live again in his pages, but he had read widely and he had discerned its importance. Dimly, Paris was a holy city already, where God's ways had been made manifest. He had not entirely fashioned his creed: that final consummation was to be reached in the year following at Hoddam Hill. But he had nearly done so, perhaps unconsciously had already done so, when from the heights of Montmartre, in a diligence and quite in the old manner, he looked down on Paris for the first time; "not a breath of smoke or dimness anywhere, every roof and dome and spire and chimney-top clearly visible, and the skylights sparkling like diamonds."

Carlyle saw Paris in that one excursion, in those two or three days, as few people have seen it after a residence of years. He was full of its history, even its geography, to begin with. Here was the very "Place de la Revolution," with grim guillotine memories, masquerading then under monarchical alias name; here was the site of the Bastille; the Faubourg St. Antoine; the Tuilleries, all the places he himself was to portray fifty times more vividly than he saw them now. He noted everything; he saw everything. Napoleon was dead but three years, lying then in his grandly lone exile's grave in rocky



St. Helena, not yet transported, an emperor returning to his own, to the Invalides and the most awe-inspiring tomb in Christendom. But Carlyle saw him too, and the "whiff of grape-shot," as vividly as aught else with physical eye. He saw Napoleon's successor, Charles Dix, walking civilly yet with regal flourish, taken notice of by none but obsequious attendants, in the Louvre picture-gallery. The little party went to the theatre (for the first time perhaps in Carlyle's life—no earlier visit is recorded) and Carlyle saw the great Talma, survivor himself of that awful Revolution. That terrific world-on-fire national upheaval was a memory then of "but thirty years since," and there were many survivors. Carlyle came very near the actual tragedy.

Other celebrities there were in Paris, and with the social influence of Mr. Strachey at his command Carlyle had advantages he could not otherwise have possessed. Yet some great personages he made acquaintance with in his own right. Legendre he saw, whose Geometry had been his first "potboiler," to whom Carlyle's translation was known, and he was introduced by him to a greater than Legendre, to the great Laplace, the astronomer, himself. Unwearied, and in spite of the foreign tongue, Carlyle went to hear the great Cuvier lecture on natural history. He met a surprising number of the distinguished men of France, and this little excursion was as valuable to Carlyle in the upshot as any providential, unearned "blessing" of his life. He was simply very fortunate, very lucky, one of Fortune's favourites and by no means the outcast, he so often declared.

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He was sure to go to the Morgue. Equally inevitably, though curiously, the letter in which he describes his visit was sent to Miss Welsh.

"I turned aside into a small mansion with the name of 'Morgue' written upon it: there lay the naked body of an old grey-headed artisan whom misery had driven to drown himself in the river! His face wore the grim fixed scowl of despair; his lean horny hands, with their long ragged nails, were lying by his sides; his patched and soiled apparel, with his apron and sabots, were hanging at his head; and there, fixed in his iron slumber, heedless of the vain din that rolled around him on every side, was this poor outcast, stretched in silence and darkness for ever. I gazed upon the wretch for a quarter of an hour; I think I never felt more shocked in my life."

The poor dead man in the Morgue might have had this consolation in death. No Carlyle but must bow at last before his majesty once death has touched him. None can despise death. It is strange how men like Carlyle and Browning can enter such places others so gladly avoid. They read lessons there. Carlyle learned a very hopeless one. But Browning went away more hopefully.

"Its wiser being good than bad,  
Its safer being meek than fierce,  
Its fitter being sane than mad,  
My own hope is, a sun will pierce  
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched,  
That after Last returns the First:  
Though a wide compass round be fetched:  
That what began best, can't end worst,  
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."

Carlyle never gave up his Calvinist Hell, whither the stupid apparently are doomed equally with the wicked. He thunders his sermons, and hell-fire looms as persistently and incredibly in his creed as in that he adapted and adopted. Carlyle never acknowledged the undeserved, unearned kindnesses of God in his own life; yet these were many and more abundant than the average. His ingratitude—for that is what it comes to—is the weak link in his creed, as surely as Burns transfixed the fatal weakness of the Kirk creed in the first verse of "Holy Willie's Prayer" and the doctrine of election.

It prevented his perception of the need of man for a God infinitely kinder and more gracious than his deserts. God had been kinder to Carlyle than he deserved. He had showered benefits and loving-kindnesses; yet even in *Sartor* (the story of the finding of Carlyle's creed) Carlyle never transfers *that* experience of his own life into his creed, because he never recognised it. A fair field and no favours! he seems to cry not irreverently or blasphemously, but ignorantly. Literally, he discerned no infinite pardon and pity and no generous distribution of unearned gifts, save at birth and in the mere gift of life. He believed in a personal Providence, yet was blind enough to leave Him out of his reckoning!

Poor Strachey amused Carlyle by his attempts at the language of the natives. Carlyle was too dignified and much too wise to make the attempt himself. "C'est bien imposant," was one Strachey gem at the cathedral of Beauvais; "C'est une rascalité dis-je; vous avez chargé deux fois trop," was another;

"Ou est les chevaux," was his shriek at the end of every post." "Kitty and I were like to split with laughing." Carlyle (it is to be observed) calls her "Kitty" to his brother John. He did not call her "Kitty" to Miss Welsh. When the coachmen held out their hands for the *pour-boire*, Strachey would answer on occasion, "Nong! vous avez drivé devilish slow!"

On his return to London with the Stracheys, Carlyle went into lodgings in Southampton Street, Holborn, not far from Irving's own residence. His sudden departure for Paris so soon after the close of the Napoleonic era had affrighted mother and father and all the family at Mainhill to an extent almost incredible to-day. James Carlyle had not been fifty miles away all his life. The mother "stopped singing for a fortnight," and another such, Alexander said, would drive her mad. All had been greatly alarmed. Profound relief followed the glad news of Carlyle's safe return to London after so glorious an adventure, far beyond the reach of the poor family, who heard of it with amazement and deep pride. Old Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle would walk about Ecclefechan very proudly because of it. In their own phrase, they would feel greatly "uplifted."

In a letter to Alexander, Carlyle states, in January 1825, "I have purchased me a small seal, and the Carlyles' crest "*Humilitate*" and all the rest of it engraven on it." If Carlyle were a "village mason's son" he had ideas far beyond the type. The crest and motto are cut on the family gravestones. If in truth it be his old family motto, the most distinguished member of the clan had no other use for it than for his seal in life and his tombstone in death.

## CHAPTER XII

### PUBLICATION OF *SCHILLER*—LETTER FROM GOETHE—HODDAM HILL—1825

*SCHILLER* was delayed for a little through the blundering (or anxiety) of the engraver to provide a good portrait of Schiller himself. Carlyle took the greatest interest in these matters, and rightly considered a good portrait, really expressive of the character, a *sine quâ non* for any true biography. His engraver now was a fellow Scot, and Carlyle waited (with what patience he could), stirring him up as well as he knew.

Writing at this time to John, his brother, he referred with a sneer to "an opium-eater, one De Quincey, for instance, who wrote a very vulgar and brutish review" in the *London* itself. The father's nicknaming propensity is coming out in the son, and later will be one of his most notorious characteristics. But here it is mere abuse Carlyle intends. What had opium-eating to do with the *Meister* review? On the 31st of January 1825 again he writes his mother that *Schiller* is fairly out. Carlyle is just a little excited perhaps, for he adds with bravado, if once he had his £90 the book can lie beside the publishers till the crack of doom for all he cares for its fate. But he was to re-

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publish and add to *Schiller* yet ere he was done with it.

Very characteristic, too, is his advice to his old mother to read and like it. "What is it, in fact, but your own sentiments, the sentiments of my good, true-hearted mother expressed in the language and similitudes that my situation suggests? So you *must* like it."

He ought to have been very comfortable in Southampton Street, but apparently he was not easy about the future. His friends remained kind, even though he had ceased to be of immediate interest as the Bullers' tutor. Mrs. Montagu was kind enough to invite Carlyle to stay with her. The Bullers still sent invitations. Indeed his "benefactors" (how he would have stormed at the word!) behaved very well to him, and remained friends one suspects long after he had ceased to be friendly or to take much interest in them. The young are selfish and change swifter than the old. New interests wipe out the old affections. Mrs. Montagu read *Schiller*. She presented Carlyle with a beautiful gold pencil-case and seal attached, bearing on it Schiller's dying words, "Calmer and calmer."

Still better, Taylor and Hessey, the publishers, offered him £100 for a *Life of Voltaire*, to be composed in the same way as the *Schiller*. He could at least keep their offer in mind, though it is easy to see he could never have entered into this task with the same gusto as the other. Schiller attracted, but Voltaire repelled, however much Carlyle recognised the need there was for such an arch iconoclast. But the pay offered was "labourer's wages."

No more than schoolmastering does literature bring adequate wages. Carlyle had experience to sober him even had he been buoyant. Luckily Carlyle could live on very meagre wages. To the literary man who depends on the public to buy his books, the process must last as long as his life. Not one of these early books could have paid much more than they had done had not Carlyle's fame increased public interest. Money came to him when he was an old man, too late. The knowledge saddened and embittered him, even as it had done to Johnson.

To Irving he was to remain the same good friend he had ever been, a beneficent influence always. We have stated already his great debt to Irving. It was greater than he knew, for his self-reliance led him to undervalue his friend's benefits. He could not be sufficiently grateful, since he was the man he was. But he was always honest and faithful and true to Irving; till he married, at least, he was always at Irving's call. "Success to him!" he calls out in a letter to John, "for though I laugh at him, I were a dog if I did not love him." Perhaps if Carlyle had remained in London, a bachelor, he would have saved Irving from himself.

Meanwhile life was passing, and Carlyle was his father's son and his mother's. What was he going to do with it? For the night was at hand. He had imbibed with his mother's milk the doctrine of Responsibility, which, taught in every peasant home in Scotland, has helped so largely to make Scotland what she is. He was ill at ease. The Paris excursion and the fine houses only increased his uneasiness. He knew he had not earned these of his own right.

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What was he to do? Remain in London and write? To do so meant spiritual death, and he knew it. He always knew that, long before he had formulated his specific message to the world. Dimly he was aware that he had something to say. So far by strict economy, persistence, his own ability and Irving's help, he had uttered part of it—as much as he knew of—all that he had recognised as part of it in Goethe and Schiller. He knew what a sore job he had had persuading publishers. The fate of his books he pretended to care nothing for, once he had uttered them; but he knew, too, the world had its own way, and the way was adamant. If books were to be written they must sell. His were selling fairly, but he guessed that the hardest life lay before him.

Hazlitt, Campbell, De Quincey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey—these were the men of note in literary London. Southey and Wordsworth indeed had fled from London, could not live in it. Carlyle soon learned the terms on which *he* must live, if he lived there at all. He must amuse London, or please London, and he would grow rich in "fame," and even earn a substantial income. But to preach to London—that was as yet impossible, if he meant to live by the preaching. At times he was inclined to the view of Wordsworth—little as he gave poor Wordsworth any credit for it—and to live far away, subsisting modestly and frugally in the country, living on a farm, perhaps, and publishing as he could.

The problem for Carlyle has been presented to us too exclusively in Carlyle's own words. It is nonsense to imagine that because Carlyle could not find a living



by literature in the London of 1825, without forfeiture of his own higher nature and the surrender of his conscience, therefore no one could obtain such a living. It was natural enough for Carlyle to suppose that where he had failed no one else could succeed. But that is not a fair way of putting the case, though Froude seems to re-echo it with gusto. The fact is, none of the poor "backsliders" of his animadversions were lifeguardsmen in the Devil's bodyguard. They were not evil. They were even far more ill done by than ill-doing. But they were not Carlyles. They were trying to teach no special message: had none of any sort to deliver. De Quincey at the best is a mere master of English, but then what English is his! what a master he is! "Our Ladies of Sorrow" is a matchless specimen of prose poetry, a delight for ever to all worshippers of the beautiful. It has even its own pathetic sadness, and it teaches too though not expressly. It would be a poor day for literature if no great man could be tolerated but a preacher. Carlyle argued the case from his own. For him it was impossible, apparently, or seemed so in 1825.

Yet Carlyle renewed his effort and succeeded. By succeeding he proved for ever that literature, even for *him*, was not impossible, after fearful struggle. No one could ever have supposed it could be anything else. But the reason did not lie in any lack of morality specifically poisonous to all young earnest souls. Campbell, one of the leaders Carlyle saw and despised, had had a far harder task and struggle than Carlyle had, for he had a smaller brain. Yet he did not blame the morality or lack of it.

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The problem was not as Carlyle and Froude represent it, not even for Carlyle. The world was not indifferent to him, any more than it had been to Wordsworth or Coleridge or Campbell. The problem of how to live by literature was, is, and remains the same old problem, solved by each in turn. If the genius of a Carlyle be not equal to the production of any book which will sell widely, and pay for its production, he cannot surely hope to live by such books as he can write. He will always have fit audience though few. Carlyle knew that, and he was not the first sufferer. If, however, the genius, not of a Carlyle but of another, be early displayed in producing books which sell readily and well, good saleable articles made up to sell, the man may succeed very well—for a time, he may even succeed for a long time and quite as well financially as the more thorough workman in the end, although he may never be an Immortal.

But the difference lies deeper than this. In the Carlyle case the author tries to get the world to buy what he desires to say to it; in the second the author knows what the world wants, *i.e.* knows what will sell, and writes accordingly. Carlyle is no exception to the rule. For he could not succeed and did not succeed till he had written a book the world wanted, a book that would sell, the *French Revolution*.

Carlyle had now to consult Miss Welsh in all matters affecting himself. Doubtless like others in like case he felt it very pleasant to do so. With her he kept up an incessant correspondence which has never yet been published, if indeed in its entirety it exists. Carlyle was a brilliant letter-writer, for the

reason already given that he grudged no labour or art in his letters. He uttered his finest thoughts there, equally as in his essays or books. We often detect there a thought which we recognise as developed later in an essay. He did not keep his good things to sell them, and he had no desire merely to see them in print. He was wonderfully free from mere vanity.

He had a love of fame as it ought to be, the fame of the good and great, or rather at least and lowest the superlatively great, the fame of the Heroes whom he lectured about, and others like them. He had no ambition to be famous merely, as a "fine" writer with superlative style, as a novelist (the novel he attempted was a *Meister* novel—not the true novel at all) or as a mere man of letters apart from the greatness of the literature he provides, the moral worth of his work.

In long letters he discussed his situation with Miss Welsh. In October or November she had fallen ill and he was greatly concerned. Perhaps her bitter mocking allusions to Irving had shocked him more than he liked. He did not know the cause and his friendship, even love for Irving, told him she wronged the "good man." His letters to her must have made her ashamed of the part she was playing. "Do not mock and laugh however gracefully, when you can help it. For your own sake I had almost rather see you sad. It is the earnest, affectionate, warm-hearted, enthusiastic Jane that I love. The acute, sarcastic, clear-sighted, derisive Jane I can, at best, but admire. Is it not a pity that you had such a turn that way? 'Pity rather that the follies of the world,

and yours among the number, Mr Quack, should so often call for castigation.' Well, well! Be it so then. A wilful man and still more a wilful woman will have her way."

So Carlyle wrote Miss Welsh, and the words are pathetic for their clear recognition of his own needs. It was the warm-hearted enthusiast he loved, and hoped to marry. The woman he was writing to was far more often the acute and sarcastic critic, crying down the wares of Mr. Quack Carlyle. Marriage to another, to Irving, might have saved her, but we know too well that marriage to Carlyle did not. One can scarcely resist the impression that she was marrying Carlyle not for love, but to win fame for herself by his aid; but perhaps at the time her vacillating mind had resolved to marry—no one. Certainly more and more as the years went on the Mephistophelean in her nature increased at the expense of her warm-hearted enthusiasm.

Carlyle's letter proves that for the bitter author of many a terrible letter and sarcastic gibe, for the woman who made all her husband's last years a long martyrdom, Carlyle himself was not to blame, nor even her marriage to Carlyle. But the marriage developed the Mephistophelean and not the enthusiastic, with sadly notable results.

Carlyle detailed his plans to her in the same letter. He must settle down, he said, near Edinburgh or near London, because he must be near or in the world if he meant to conquer it. What would she say to his becoming a farmer? He had been thinking of that too and very seriously. Literature in Carlyle's case was not likely to bring sufficient money,

but allied to another way of earning a living it might serve. Farming and literature ought to go hand in hand ; but Burns, a practical farmer, found very much to the contrary. No two occupations can ever be associated with advantage, for no man can put all his skill and energy into two businesses at once. But the fallacy glimmered in front of Carlyle, as it had before Burns. When he came to try, Carlyle was fortunate enough to possess, in Alexander, a brother who would attend to the real business of the farming. But even Alexander failed to make farming any more profitable than the literary portion of the pseudo-partnership proved to be. Indeed the literary part proved the more profitable !

He argued all these things with Miss Welsh, knowing that she was very much averse to any such notion, not only because the proposals did not appear promising but because they savoured of the lower status of the farmer. If she married a literary man she meant to have all the advantages derivable from it,—a "Salon" perhaps. She seems to have dreamed of a "sinecure" for Carlyle, a snug little Government billet, requiring insignificant labour in exchange for salary. Little did she understand the man she had become engaged to. The chance allusion reveals the difference of moral character between these two.

It was noble of Carlyle and like him and very modest of him to say as he did to her in the way of chivalrous lovers from the dawn of time till now, that he was not worthy of her. In such matters the man usually is beneath the woman, notably in that he is so readily disposed to compromise, where she holds by

the highest in spite of all discouragement. But Carlyle was the moral superior of the two.

"A Sinecure! God bless thee, darling! I could not touch a sinecure though twenty of my friends should volunteer to offer it."

That was the truth. He could not, and that is one of the reasons Carlyle is so great a man. It is the greatest glory of Carlyle that he could not accept wages where work had not been performed, could not and would not be a sham and a humbug, not even in their mildest, most alluring guise. Of few men will the world believe that they *could* not accept a sinecure, but it believes it of Carlyle. The world has the credit at least of honouring the man who rises to greatness in spite of its temptations.

Miss Welsh too was beginning to open her eyes. She had been blinder than Miss Gordon and she suspected it. Her own heart had meannesses which found no entrance into Carlyle's. It was the beginning of a very humbling education. She began now to realise the goodness of Carlyle, and she was becoming calmer concerning Irving.

It is almost plain that she tried to set Carlyle against Irving, and alluded to the benefits conferred in a way which galled Carlyle. One comes to wonder more and more for how much that is cold and ungrateful in Carlyle the real responsibility rests with Miss Welsh's sarcasms. He is evidently alluding to something she had written which galled him. "Help me to the uttermost! If he can help himself to get along the path through life it is all that I shall ask of him." Irving never waited for Carlyle to ask for help and Carlyle knew it. But it is plain he is answering a

taunt—nothing less. How many times did she taunt him thus?

If Carlyle was to help her to a literary life, it is plain she is not helping Carlyle to live his own. The good influence is set steadily from him to her, and not as in ten thousand cases from the woman to the man. Yet he states that there *is* a "warm-hearted Jane," and he cries after her death "Where was her peer?" Did not the peerless one exist in his own mind only, and was not his remorse at the close rather the unreason of his own nobility?

Irving himself at this juncture advised London, and perhaps from his "outside" point of view Irving was right. Carlyle appeared to gain nothing by removal to the North, and he lost much of the influence which might have helped him. In his own eager, extravagant way Carlyle characterises each of his decisive movements as now in a fashion of his own, and this migration to the North is elevated to a sort of flight from the Devil and "necessary" for him. Since what he did was fated to be, no man can assert it was not. Carlyle did certain things, and we know the result was good in the end. That cannot be asserted of what he did not do, but might have done. But in any event *our* Carlyle could not have been brought into existence had he acted otherwise. Craigenputtock and Craigenputtock alone could produce *Sartor Resartus*. One cannot fancy London ever would. Carlyle had to be driven back on himself if he were to have leisure for thought, his one real vital need at this time.

So Carlyle lingered and hesitated, not wasting time because nothing pressed on him but the need

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for doing the best he could—which was what he was now considering. He kept going out among the London literary giants, and he grew less and less enamoured of them. The picture of Schiller amongst his peers had gladdened and fortified the author of *Schiller*. But whenever he describes to Miss Welsh those literary folk he was meeting in the flesh he appears at his worst, deliberately contemptuous and scornful, even gossiping and retailing gossip. This (of De Quincey) is nothing less than shameful after the bitter allusions we have already cited,—and if one were to adopt the language of the Kirk and a few centuries ago one must acknowledge that God chastened Carlyle for his own salvation and for his own good. He stood in sore need of chastisement.

“The dwarf opium-eater, my critic in the *London Magazine*, lives here in lodgings, with a wife and children living, or starving, on the scanty produce of his scribble far off in Westmoreland. He carries a laudanum bottle in his pocket and the venom of a wasp in his heart. Hazlitt is writing his way through France and Italy. The ginshops and pawnbrokers bewail his absence.”

So he goes on till he begins to shriek as Swift shrieked over the Yahoos he hated so intensely. Carlyle has close kinship to Swift. This one letter quoted by Froude is as bad as anything in *Gulliver*, as horrible to read as aught about Yahoos.

It is significant that a letter like this should be addressed to Miss Welsh. He must have had some special purpose to serve, perhaps he desired to put her out of countenance once and for ever with her



love of "fame," men of letters and literature and the literary London in which she longed to set up her salon. Carlyle does not seem to have shown outwardly any sign that he was in private inveighing such Swiftian diatribes. Perhaps he thought these men were laughing and scoffing at him. Perhaps they were doing so. But nothing excuses the tittle-tattle and belittling gossip: nothing more loudly cried to Heaven for justice on Carlyle than those sneers at poverty, the laudanum bottle, and poor Leigh Hunt "feeding on the lightest diet at Pisa." Is poverty only honourable in Carlyle? In his letter home to his father he tells the old man that Miss Kirkpatrick has £50,000! Perhaps he shared, more than he suspected, the Scots peasant's whole-hearted respect for the possession of wealth.

And then, once more, something happened, not this time to change his destiny but to strengthen him for the battle. "The other afternoon," he tells his brother John on December 18, 1825, "as I was lying dozing in a brown study after dinner, a lord's lackey knocked at the door and presented me with a little blue parcel, requiring for 'it a note of delivery. I opened it and found two pretty, stitched, little books and a letter from Goethe! I copy it and send it for your edification. The patriarchal style of it pleases me much."

Then followed what Carlyle would call "the authentic text" of Goethe's letter.

It was a kindly epistle from the old Monarch of Letters acknowledging the translation of *Wilhelm Meister* which Carlyle had so proudly sent. Perhaps on the whole it was wise for all concerned Goethe

did not forget to acknowledge it altogether as he might have done. Some time had indeed elapsed. For Carlyle forgot and forgave nothing, and had Goethe failed him he could scarcely have received the whole-hearted enthusiasm of Carlyle and his wife all their days! It would have changed history.

Goethe had meant still greater kindness by his act, which however came to nothing. The circumstances of the case were these. Lord Bentinck had called to see the great author at Weimar, and him Goethe had requisitioned to deliver his letter and packet of poems to Carlyle, to the amazement of the peer, doubtless, when he learned who Carlyle was. The flunkey never returned!

With the letter came the poems Goethe sent by the same packet. Immediately, and very naturally, Carlyle was raised to the seventh heaven of delight, and set to work at once to send the glad tidings to Mainhill and his brother John. The original apparently he sent to Haddington, for Miss Welsh to keep for him. He was as much transported as it was possible for Carlyle to be, and it was a notable even striking coincidence that now, when he is really launched on the sea of literature and feels so isolated and contemptuous of his fellows who are ignoring him, the greatest living author should thus extend his blessing to him. It seemed an omen to himself, and a verification.

To Goethe, for his part, Carlyle's translation had come at the most favourable moment also. Goethe had been considering lately the problems involved in the international exchange of literature, himself gifted with the keenest eye for the advantages gained by

all nations from the free acceptance of each other's thought. Goethe himself owed an immense debt to Shakespeare: he was now to see with satisfaction that one of the rising men of the new age owed a great deal to himself. But that was to come. Meanwhile he recognised gladly that this unknown was translating his own work for English readers and doing his best to spread over Britain his fame and his name. That was flattering from any one, and Goethe was grateful.

Perhaps Goethe's letter settled Carlyle's difficulties. At least he made up his mind after receiving it. Goethe's voice he recognised as the voice of the Ages and Sages, and it had whispered encouragement. If he stayed in London he knew he would soon cease to deserve it. Carlyle knew well the noble literary life Goethe and Schiller had led. Eloquently had he written of it and been praised by the *Times* for that eloquence. He determined now that he too like Schiller would seek the noble path. He would retire to the hills and to country life and freedom. But where?

Miss Welsh too adopted the new view, perhaps recognised the new note, or rather for the first time realised the moral strength of Carlyle. She was unrepentant, however, on the main point and she scoffed at the possibility of success. Yet there if anywhere, she could not but confess, lay all prospect of matrimony between Carlyle and herself. She was beginning probably to love Carlyle more truly and with understanding. Yet apparently she flouted the notion of marriage with him. Certainly it is one thing to love the noble qualities of a man and another

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and very different thing to marry him. Carlyle was not yet able to keep a wife and she had no money. She knew, though Carlyle did not, that her mother, not herself, possessed the income from her father's estate. It must have given her pleasure, so agreeably to be assured by his every letter that Carlyle *was* genuinely indifferent to money, and that it could hardly make any difference to Carlyle's love for her did he know. She is said to have made out her will instituting Carlyle as her general heir at this time, the will practically which she left behind her, adhered to after marriage, when she died.

Carlyle took matters very seriously. He at least had been dreaming of matrimony, or rather of married literary companionship with Jane Welsh all along. His own initiation into Society, perhaps his observance of the needs and luxuries of Miss Kirkpatrick, had awakened his eyes to the style of life which young ladies of better fortune are born to and expect. He may have been less assured than he was in the beginning that Miss Welsh could endure the literary simple life. Anyhow he had naturally offered to set her free and she had refused to accept his renunciation.

An "heiress" must always be difficult to satisfy, perhaps can never be satisfied but in the result, that her lover of lesser fortune is really in love with herself and not her fortune. She becomes the receptacle of all mean whispers. She overhears every suggested doubt. Her money is her curse and the curse of others. But Miss Welsh was no heiress. *She* could not be deceived: only Carlyle could, and he must learn in good time. Miss Welsh knew that she must marry a man who could, in sober earnestness, keep

her and provide for her. She would be dependent on him. In spite of the Goethe letter then and her own increasing admiration of Carlyle, Miss Welsh doubted in every fibre of her being whether he could earn enough for both. By marrying him was she not increasing his responsibilities? She undoubtedly was.

Carlyle had made up his mind that he at least would tread the path Schiller had trodden and himself had praised. He felt he had something to say and he knew he could never get it uttered if he stayed in London, writing in magazines what the magazines clamoured for and not what he wished to write. But he wanted to carry the girl he loved with him, to persuade her and have her benediction. Poor Carlyle! It was a hard task, for indeed her point of view was the obvious. If she had understood him she would not only have set him free but forced him free, that is, had she loved the cause more than the man she would have recognised *she* could not advance it. She had been combating, for her own interests, the very notion of him regarding literature "so very morally."

Was not his duty to provide a home by writing books? Fame would come by the writing of them, money also and marriage, if he succeeded. All that could only be found in London. This high and lofty Scots farmhouse scheme was nonsense in the shrewd, worldly mind of Jane Welsh.

Carlyle tried hard to reason with her, to explain to her that her literature led only to lives of poor esteem, like De Quincey's or Campbell's. He had been savage as Swift regarding the poor fellows, and sneered savagely at them for her sake more than his

own grudge. In a word, he endeavoured to instruct Miss Welsh at this late day as to the manner of man he was.

She gave in, but she never believed him. Loyally she made the most of him and his circumstances, bitterly conscious that he was having his own way and was "selfish." She came to think at last that he was sacrificing her. Carlyle had been honest as the day, but he was in love with her. The conversation and correspondence between the two are far different now from what these were in the beginning of their intercourse. Now Carlyle is showing her that her "fame" is not worth the effort, appealing to the "enthusiastic warm-hearted Jane" he enthusiastically discerned in her and stating firmly and clearly what he at least must do were he even to leave her. There were only two things she could have done which could have helped Carlyle, and she did neither.

She could have said she would marry him and live with him and help him wherever he went, and that she would gladly do whatever he thought best; or she could have said that her own nature was such that, while loving him and admiring him, she loved a respectable city life, friends, and the refinements of civilisation much better, and could only marry him if he could guarantee these.

"You too are unhappy," he tells her, "and I see the reason." A deep, loving, earnest spirit, and no fit task for it to do! Perhaps that was one way of putting the truth of it, but it was overstated. They both suffered from the same thing, he said. Let them join forces and be, by so much, the stronger. He appealed to her higher nature. Little did he recognise

what ailed her for the thing it really was, the struggle between the higher plus poverty and the lower plus wealth. He implored her finally to trust him. Half despairing, half hoping still she learned at length that he at least had chosen. She could not make him deviate. She had tried.

Craigenputtock wanted a tenant as it often did, and Miss Welsh proposed in grim joke that Carlyle should retire thither since he dreamed of an idyllic rural existence. Carlyle took her up seriously, to her indignation. The answer which Carlyle made to her in turn is a very noble one. Froude prints it for its significance. Curiously, however, he persists in calling Carlyle selfish the more the poor man insisted on being himself. So noble indeed was the letter we may infer that more than any other circumstance it brought Jane Welsh to be the wife of Thomas Carlyle. She was aware of one circumstance, however, of which he was yet ignorant, viz. that in reality she had no money of her own. She told Carlyle, and Carlyle naturally was only the more relieved to hear of it. The Craigenputtock proposal fell through on this occasion. Carlyle could only go there if he married Miss Welsh, or he may have thought so.

It is absurd almost to recall the social or status argument against their marriage. It is hinted always that she recognised, as probably she did and her people and relations naturally insisted, that she was marrying "beneath her." But if she really thought so she was curiously mistaken. At this time, Dr. Welsh had long been dead and the public memory is short. Her mother and she lived quietly on a modest income barely sufficient for both living

together. They moved in the social circles of Haddington and also in the ordinary lower professional circles in Edinburgh. To no one so much as Carlyle perhaps did Miss Welsh appear as a lady of wealth. She was bright and witty and pretty, but not nearly so much so as Miss Gordon of Kirkcaldy, a lady perhaps of greater family influence. It is doubtful whether Miss Welsh would ever have made so "brilliant" a match as Miss Gordon did make, and in any event the choice before her was not so large as to include a wealthy Carlyle. None of her male admirers approached him in ability and character. He was already known in Edinburgh as a young man with a future. Lord Young tells a story of this time, when his father introducing him as a schoolboy to this rising hope of their native county of Dumfries (to rouse the boy's emulation perhaps) remarked to his son to "take note of him," for he would be a great man some day. The father of this witty and brilliant Scots judge was Procurator Fiscal in Dumfries, occupying a position of some local importance, and was well qualified to judge. Carlyle impressed every one he came in contact with. He was perhaps the only man of high literary ability or scholarly education with whom Miss Welsh was acquainted.

The longer he pondered over his problem the clearer grew his conviction that London held out no inducement to him or hope of remunerative employment in literature calculated to forward his true advancement. It is worth while to cast a glance over the London of 1825 to which he had now been introduced.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE OLD RÉGIME—CARLYLE IN LONDON, 1825

IT is difficult for us to realise to-day the national era which came to an end amid the tremendous excitement and exultant buoyancy of the Reform Act of 1832. The old régime was a thing so different from our own that it requires prolonged consideration and some little imagination to conjure up any conception of it. It is to recall a vanished atmosphere. Carlyle himself has been one of the foremost of the forces and influences modifying the present generation and its immediate predecessors. We often forget that he appeared in another epoch than our own, while yet the long contest between Land and People, between Authority and the assertion of individual freedom, was at a critical stage of evolution; that Carlyle lived through an important moment of our national history, fighting in his own way for the freedom we now possess; and that he was all the time surrounded by hostile influences of which, since the victory of the cause he championed, we know almost nothing.

Can it be realised to-day that Carlyle, the arch-priest of theism, was denounced as an atheist? That he was publicly prayed for from the pulpits of the Church? That he was regarded as an enemy, not

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of a Kirk creed he had found incredible and had never attacked, but of religion itself and morality? Under the old régime nobody was regarded as believing in morality or the efficacy of the Ten Commandments who did not believe that these Commandments were thundered forth to the world amid the awful terrors of Mount Sinai and derived their sanction from the fact. If he disbelieved the last he denied the first!

This astonishing view was gravely maintained at first even by men like Irving and Carlyle himself, till the latter worked out his own salvation—and ours—in *Sartor Resartus*.

That was in the domain of religion in its narrower signification where especially Carlyle's is a paramount force. Carlyle was a hero and leader in the cause of religious freedom in its modern aspect, for the individual. Carlyle's life was the first to startle a world petrified in ancient habits of thought with the phenomenon of a man who preached God and righteousness, religion, yet stood outside all the Church creeds, finding these incredible. Carlyle found God, not as a deduction from Jewish tradition, but as a living force in the world round us, in man and the history of man. Even though you were to sweep away your Bible and Churches, said Carlyle in effect, God remains, and your reckoning with Him, however long delayed, is inevitable. The creed of Carlyle applies to this world, not the next. In Carlyle a new spirit, a fresh force, appeared militant among us. The new spirit was there, it is true, independently of Carlyle, but Carlyle shared its fullest inspiration as no one else did. He is the hero of his age.

Without Carlyle the great mass of literary, thinking men and women to-day outside the conventional organised Church creeds would be without any religious creed at all. That their creed is theistic rather than agnostic is due to the life and work of Carlyle more than to any other known influence. Darwin and Huxley and others show different phases of the same movement, while Spencer seems the negation of it. For himself, Carlyle, it is true, frowned on the other developments of his own spirit, revealing thereby the passionate if narrow sincerity of his own theism. But that was because he failed to discern what was there, a theism possibly as ardent and more intellectual than his own. It was the result of Carlyle's ignorance of Darwin's true position, and indeed of Darwin's or other scientists' work in general, as well as of the fact that while Carlyle could trace the finger of God in great human movements, his own worldly triumph later on withered his inspiration by encouraging the delusion that his own thought, not God, had done and was to do the work. The change was indeed to be wrought through Carlyle, but he was the mere instrument. But he never thought so.

In short, Carlyle on the top of the wave was rather given to the despairing view that he was the last, not the first, of the procession! His wife's death seems to have shattered everything for poor Carlyle, and very humbly at the end he had to rest on vague hopes rather than the passionate certainty that might have been his.

In the political world Carlyle's influence is no less significant, though the full effect has yet to be

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witnessed. Nevertheless, the most modern of all our present-day movements, the revolt from "trade" principles, being applied to the life of the people, against the domination of political shibboleths, the passionate desire springing up for realities, our growing lack of faith in the mere label, is more due to the life and work of Carlyle than to any other human agency. For Ruskin but takes up Carlyle's task.

Carlyle, however, is a suggestive, corrective, stimulating political writer rather than an expounder or adapter of the constitution or the constitutional principles of Britain. He does not consider merely the form found practicable in his own country. He never considered the practicable at all. Was an existing Government right or wrong, wise or foolish, strong or weak? All these meant the same thing to Carlyle and for him there was no other question. The form was immaterial if wisdom were the result. According to the answer given, he fulminated or blessed. But one cannot consider such a thinker as Carlyle less valuable because he is not a practical statesman, and because his influence for good is among the few who lead rather than among the many who are led. Carlyle goes deep to the foundations of all government, yet curiously with such a leaning to Absolutism as seriously diminished the value of his teaching for a high-spirited race like his own.

In 1825 the struggle that had been going on with increasing bitterness between the old governing forces of the nation—the landed proprietors—and the new-come communities, burghs, trading corporations—in short, the contest that gave us our modern social

order, the industrial Britain of to-day—was drawing to a fierce crisis. Outside the landed interest, who alone had been accustomed to govern because they allowed no one else the privilege, the rest of the community had no voice or share in government. The old cry, heard now in Russia, that they were unfit, was raised to prevent all possibility of their ever being fit. Tories, well-meaning but narrow and ignorant, were found who believed they could not even be trusted. As a result, the country was being deprived of the services of the men most likely to save her, because these were filled with the new spirit which the French Revolution had kindled to a fierce flame everywhere. Pitt, the greatest leader the country possessed, would have granted the inevitable or counselled to do so long before so critical a period had been reached, had it not been for the dangers the French conflagration created by the very excess of its own spirit. In France was to be seen the proof that a people *left to themselves* could not govern themselves and fell a prey to the first dictator. Pitt felt that to surrender to the People anything was impossible till at least the French issue had been tried. He may have been over-timid, and Burns felt his decision as a passionate injustice; but Pitt was responsible and Burns was not. Thus it had come about that in 1825 Reform, already dangerously overdue, was clamouring everywhere.

Great commercial towns had no representative or representation in Parliament, while “pocket burghs” or villages of two or three voters possessed a member. Worse, the towns were being told that there never could be any change. Parliament, nevertheless, as

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constituted in 1825 was utterly discredited. The old régime had been proved a fraud as a guardian of the liberties of Britain, just as bureaucracy has shown itself grossly incompetent in present-day Russia. Its record for the past was the loss of our American colonies and the threatened disruption of the Empire itself. It had been reduced to impotence by the skilful bribery of George the Third. In asserting their own independence, indeed, these colonies were establishing their claim to be of British race, and not subjects of any house of Hanover which had usurped British government. Little did the British People realise that the sturdy colonists, out on the heights of New Jersey with Washington, were fighting the battle of *British* freedom and guaranteeing our liberty at home. Our old régime had not saved us. As we have said, however, the French Revolution had given it a new lease of life. In 1825, nevertheless, the long delay was irritating to madness. The wisest of the landed party knew that something radical must be done, but even the bravest among them felt so acutely the thrill of horror which arose from the abuse of liberty—nay, the very denial of it—in France, that they dreaded the very step their wisdom told them must be taken.

Britain was, in fact, well on the way to the crisis in 1825. Carlyle, an unknown young man from Scotland going about London, discontented, ill at ease, unsettled, with the new creed fermenting in him, was the one man a prophet endowed with the gift of insight would have kept his eye on. In order to understand fully Carlyle's tone and temper at the time and to discover what truth underlay his

bitter contempt for his contemporaries, we must remember that in him, more acutely and to a greater degree than in any other living man in Great Britain of the day, was simmering this national unrest. No more than his neighbours did he understand what was wrong with himself and every one else, but his was the only spirit which, sharing this new spirit, was strong enough to look beyond it and realise its nature, not the mere movement for political reform which every little Whig like Jeffrey would reduce it to, but a great movement in which Britain was readjusting herself to a set of conditions in the entire domain of thought such as had never existed before. The guidance of centuries had been found unable to guide us longer.

Carlyle, therefore, took little interest in the petty "martyrdoms" for Radicalism, so called, going on then. He was in truth far more radical than any of them. He heard men telling him of a new millennium that was coming, but in his heart Carlyle knew better. He knew that far deeper problems lay behind, which his age was neither trying to solve nor could solve by the political agitation which almost every other literary man appeared to consider either as a panacea or as the total destruction of everything.

Never surely did there live a man more certain of his own intellectual pre-eminence than Thomas Carlyle. In his scornful attitude to the men he was meeting in London in 1825, Carlyle acted more or less unconsciously, and he could not have expressed in words possibly wherein their incompetence consisted and why he disliked so intensely their cheap fame and reputation. The spirit which was asserting

itself within him made Carlyle look beyond these men, and alas! he could see nothing but the patent fact that every one of them, "great" or not, was even less qualified than himself to give instruction or wisdom to any.

From the vantage ground of the twentieth century we can see much of which the actual performers were ignorant. The crisis which was threatening in the immediate distance in 1825 has long passed away and been succeeded by newer phases of development. The People now clamour, as once the Lords clamoured, as once a King endeavoured to his own destruction, to secure absolute uncontrolled power; and it is certain that, if Britain is to remain a Chosen People—that is, the leading exemplary nation at whose expense others learn—her People must be taught the same old lesson, the lesson Carlyle came to point out to us, that wisdom, not the furtherance of self-interest (no matter how "enlightened"), is the aim of all government. Carlyle came to call the People of Britain to a halt before they went too far. In the Absolutism which stultified his own work for freedom we may read the warning as to what awaits us if we put self-interest first.

Not that the Whigs have ceased with Jeffrey or will ever cease. The present cry against the House of Lords—or any real, revising, vetoing chamber—is but the latest phase of the Whig spirit which flatters the multitude for its own ends against the wisdom of Carlyle. Self-interest, say the Whigs, demands the abolition of the Lords for all practical purposes, not because a better plan than Time's (which is God's)



plan can be invented, not that the People and nation may be better governed, but in order "that the will of the People shall prevail." It is the old cry, *Vox populi, vox Dei*. There can be little doubt, however, even in the breast of the most ardent Whig who ever sought power over his fellows, that the People are no more likely to succeed in our fortunate kingdom than the Kings and Lords who have already tried in vain. The racial spirit within the People will prevent it.

We have progressed since 1825. The compromise of 1832 found in "property" apparently a sacred Whig principle or means of differentiating freemen who should be allowed a share in government from the freemen who should be allowed none! Successive adjustments and lowerings of the property "qualification" (Heaven save us!) have followed, and perhaps it cannot be long till the whole absurdity is abandoned as a Whig delusion and every Briton shall be admitted a freeman *ipso facto* because he is a British citizen. On no other principle can we be a free, self-governing race like the Romans, for *Civis Romanus sum* is the last word in popular government for an empire. Under our marvellous constitution, the adaptation of ages, the People can exercise full sway without danger of abandonment of the chance for wisdom and repentance. With single chambers there can be no room for wisdom or repentance. Government is discredited when the People are left without appeal. No nation has ever found it possible to live under Whig conditions. People, Kings, and Lords must alike be protected from themselves, and all three are present in Britain. In the United States the

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People are actually more closely cabined than the British people would submit to. The President there has a sway our Kings have never been permitted to obtain.

This digression will be pardoned, for it is necessary to explain the very vital place Carlyle occupies in our national thought to-day. His was the spirit which really saw farthest of all into our constitution by showing us the prime requisite of all constitutions. Wisdom, says Carlyle, is the end of all government, whatever politicians may say; wisdom, not count of head or ascertainment of the "majority." It does not matter in the least whether a wrong measure be enacted by a majority of all but one if the one be wiser than the majority. Froude erroneously supposed that Carlyle was opposed to "popular" government. At least, if Carlyle personally did dislike the accepted government of his own country, his thought and teaching, his spirit, was by no means hostile to it. Rather he dreaded what it might become if he were not listened to. Carlyle is like a wise watch-dog for his race, warning it of the fallacies which undissipated might result in disaster. But our government is not and never yet has been the sort Froude and he imagined. We have never governed ourselves by count of head. "Majority" has merely decided at times who were to represent the People, but ours is a representative government, not a conference of delegates. Only if Whigs ruled eternally could we act as Froude supposed we did.

The reader, then, who lives in the present epoch must not forget the long-vanished conditions of 1825 in which Carlyle was moving on this his first visit to

the metropolis of Britain, the centre of national disturbance. Modern political freedom as we know it to-day had not yet emerged from the welter of conflict so far as the great bulk of the population was concerned. Dissenters from the Church, it is true, had obtained contemptuous recognition, but Roman Catholics were not yet emancipated. The old terror of Rome as a political factor still appeared a very real terror, the actuality never considered. There was little freedom of speech, and indeed some peculiarly atrocious work was being perpetrated by His Majesty George the Fourth's Judges to suppress it.

In 1825 the terrible shadow cast by Napoleon had vanished for ever, and the Emperor Adventurer had already slept peacefully for four years in his narrow exile's grave beneath the willows of Longwood, St. Helena. Carlyle had lived beneath the shadow for the boyhood of his life, and as the village scholar had read his father's newspaper to the assembled villagers. In those critical days, when everything was taxed that could be taxed up to the last extremity of tolerance, the newspaper cost a large sum of money, and one served a district. James Carlyle's publicspirited action in buying one proves that this "peasant" was really the public man of his village. The boy Carlyle read out the war news in those early days, just as in every weaving or manufacturing shop in the South of Scotland one of the toilers read out the newspaper for which each weaver had contributed. The reader was himself recouped in the same way for the loss of earnings occasioned. It is to be noted also that at the beginning of the manufacturing era every weaver was his own master and could call his

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soul his own, though the hard-won wages were scanty. If these men were denied a vote, their keen interest in politics and national concerns put to shame the better classes like Fox, who had votes only to despise them for the most part. Carlyle may have seen the yeomanry muster for the "false alarm" that "Nap had landed!" Like the whole world, he had viewed with patriotic relief the downfall of the great Corsican, and like others breathed more freely when at long last death dissipated the nightmare of his return.

But the aftermath of war and repression and suppression which French Revolution and Napoleon alike had forced on Britain was now visibly present in 1825. Napoleon dead left at last nothing in the way of the reckoning the Government must make with the nation, and the exasperation on both sides was intense. It was a Britain driven nearly desperate which confronted the keen, observing eyes of the rustic-looking young Scots philosopher who was then walking London streets. The Radicalism and incipient Chartism which was the inevitable result of Pitt's policy savagely administered found a zealous but self-controlled sympathiser in Carlyle. A year or two before this London visit he had been walking one day in Bruntsfield Links in Edinburgh when he met an Advocate of his acquaintance carrying a gun, on his way apparently to some yeomanry or militia drill. Everywhere the more prosperous elements of the population were tending to panic, the "haves," as Carlyle said, in dread of the "have-nots," and militias and armed forces everywhere were held in readiness by alarmed authorities to suppress risings and disorders, mobs and mob violence, in all the great

unfranchised manufacturing towns. Some indeed were not disposed to stop at the riots but aimed at the extirpation of the dangerous-looking weaver! Starving, out-of-work, hopeless men, goaded to madness by conditions they could not understand and to rebellion by the display of force used against them, were misled into hoping the millennium and the kingdom of God on earth would come with a franchise extended to the People.

"You should be carrying the like of this," said the Advocate cheerily to Carlyle, patting the musket as he spoke. "Yes," came the muttered response of Carlyle, "but I haven't decided yet on which side"; "which probably he thought was quiz," adds Carlyle, as it by no means was entirely.

Irving and he, as we have seen, when Irving was in Glasgow, had viewed with sympathy and indignation at official callousness the out-of-work, ragged, ill-fed wretches who were being dragooned into sullen and submissive silence. None hears you, the Whig was telling them. But God heard.

Carlyle was to tell the world later what conclusions he had come to regarding Chartism and other phenomena of the sort, and in one respect was qualified as was no other of the thinkers who were considering the problems, the official governing mind least of all. Carlyle knew all about the sufferings and distress of the People at first hand. It was in his very blood. With his own eyes he had seen the straits his own people were reduced to and the worse straits of their neighbours, while from his father he had heard of even greater suffering and misery behind and anterior to that: when masons used to

retire from the eyes of their own companions to eat the plain crust and drink the bare water which was their sole nourishment. That the poor suffered dreadfully Carlyle well knew, but he was high-minded and great enough in spirit and insight to be aware also that the causes lay really in far other directions than that supposed in the nostrums of Whig and Chartist alike.

When, therefore, later years were to witness the much-trumpeted, "God-sent" nostrum of "Free" trade, or the manufacturer's interpretation of the social problem supplant the older agriculturist's one, which admittedly even to himself had become no longer applicable, Carlyle was there to warn us that the so-called solution was no solution, that the chief end of Britain was neither "trade" nor the import of "free" corn, but to accomplish far nobler things.

Carlyle, in short, was born under the ancient régime, and carried within him the truth and the strength of that. So that while his existence beheld the whole vast change from the era of the land-owner to that of the manufacturer, he was not carried away, as the smaller thinkers were, to consider that either manufacturer or land-owner or People constituted the whole problem for Britain.

The "Free-trade," Cobden, or Manchester manufacturers' movement was simply the manufacturing interest demanding that it should not be sacrificed to the agricultural. It was nothing else—no grander, no greater. It was not in the least a spiritual or any "truth" at all. With the furious surge round to the implicit adoption of the manufacturer's interest in "cheap" food and labour, artfully misrepresented as

the "interest" of everybody, we have fortunately little to do in a book of this kind. It is only necessary to remind the reader that in Carlyle he will find the spirit most antipathetic to Cobdenism, Utilitarianism, and all other superficial nostrums, equally as to Socialism and other slaveries and anarchies. Carlyle's voice has been raised louder than any other in passionate demand that our national life shall *not* be conducted in the spirit of "business" and majority-rule, that the trade and well-being, and above all, the "wealth" of Britain do not depend on whether Britain shall be able to sell cheaper than her neighbours, but whether Britain can give in exchange good honest goods and work such as no other can supply. The leadership in trade goes with the leadership in intelligence, morality, and character. The cheapest selling nation is like to be the weakest and most worthless of the lot. Trade follows character.

Indeed the very phrase "competition," the struggle of nations, the godless conception of man as a creature competing to extinction for bare existence, is part of the dreadful inheritance we have had thrust upon us by this "business" way of regarding national life. To Carlyle, as to every thinker who really believes that this world is governed by God, no man in the world can be a competitor with any one. All have an indefeasible right to existence and to work to the utmost of the power within them. Men are not likely to allow themselves to be enslaved either by manufacturer or Socialist. None can take away these natural rights from any man without incurring the penalty and paying it to the uttermost

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farthing. The hideous "competitive" notion is the worst legacy we have inherited.

The struggle observed in life going on between men is not as to who shall get rich quickest or get rich at all, but the blind struggle men wage in the world till they find out the work each is best adapted for. Were the "business" way of observing life the true one, then each nation would benefit by the removal of its "competitor," a *reductio ad absurdum*. Each nation and each individual has his own task to perform in the world, said Carlyle, and must perform it at his peril. That, after all, is the greatest discovery Carlyle made, and it was a very old one. Rather, Carlyle alone kept his head through this national welter, and alone observed the eternal law and God. The competition fallacy leads to such attempts as those now made by Australia, the most insufficiently populated country in the world, to constitute itself a nation hermetically sealed, literally to doom itself to impotence and sterility. But the vile fog will pass, and Australia, with head well clear of it, will become, like all the rest of the world, free in every sense to all God's creatures. The history of China and of old Japan and the Transvaal forbid all possibility of the costly lesson needing repetition.

Our generation is awakening already to one awkward consequence the manufacturer had not considered when the agricultural interest was sacrificed with so much cant and humbug to his own. "Cheap" food was a cunning way of putting the real question, Food. No nation wants cheap food. It wants freedom to earn the finest food it can buy. It wants to realise itself in its own God-guided way, and food is



certain as the sure reward of all honest work. The Cobdenite discovered shrewdly that the "cheaper" food could be imported, the easier the manufacturer obtained "cheap" servants and the more of them he obtained. Keep down the price of food, he said, and everyone will have plenty, obviously an irrational deduction. He invented his beautiful platform cry just as though he really meant food for all, where otherwise would be none! In fact, he wished to cloak over the adamantine truth that no man ought to be at liberty to employ a freeman cheaper than he could a slave. The slaveowner was compelled to feed slaves well if he wished to get any work out of them, otherwise they died, but the manufacturer would like to get work out of employees and escape the burden! A horse *must* be fed, no matter how the master grumble at the price of oats. Strange that our modern employer of labour alone shall be encouraged to preach so, that more and more of us may be enslaved by a hopeless heresy! We should declare instant war against the slaver who acted so. When the British people get to know the true inwardness of this cry of "cheap food," raised by those whose one aim in life seems to be to get cheap and soulless labourers at wages they could not keep a slave upon, when the nation learns by stern experience that the cry means the service of freemen at a lower cost than was ever paid for slaves, the cry is doomed for ever and a day. The nation will avoid "cheap" food as it would the plague. All food must at least cost what it takes to procure. Never mind the food, said Carlyle, keep your eye on the eternal verities and the food will never fail, brim-full and running over.

Surely the advance of civilisation is not towards the region the "business" man would lead it. The ideal of the "business man" seems to be to run Britain like a Trust with an entire population of slaves, enfranchised, the better to seal their own doom and spare the conscience of the employer. It is the law, he tells them, not the old foolish God's law, but the law of atheism. He would leave out God and the spirit within his own race, even in the garb of "employees." There is something there grander than the "business man's" mind can fathom. On the other hand we see the contradiction, which is really only the other side of the same statement, Socialism, where the sole difference is but one of label. Slavery is the sure mark of both.

Outside these altogether is Carlyle, or any creed which rests on the sure foundation that there is a God who cannot be left out of either problem or solution. God does not depend on us or on what we think for His august existence. His way is the way of Freedom, the way of the Ages before us and ages behind. We see Him and know Him in history and in human experience, and *not* in Whig or any other "principles." God's message to Britain can be found alone in the history of Britain. No Herbert Spencer, still less the principles his purblind eyes professed to behold, ever made the great British Empire or can ever "run" it. The way of history will be duly shown, the resultant between the clash of Whiggism and Socialism and the fundamental racial spirit of Britain expressed in our Constitution.

The reader may now have some conception of Carlyle's true position in our national thought, and

he will be able to contrast his worth to us compared with Herbert Spencer, the mere highest of the temporal. Other creeds are the work of very little men, but Carlyle's creed is eternal. In him, more than in any one of these others, was the eternal spirit, of which the spirit of the age is but a phase. During the years, say between 1825-1880, which witnessed the inauguration and triumph of the "business man's" era in Britain, when gold became the one thing respected and striven for, Carlyle most surely of all the thinkers of Great Britain represented the deeper thought and spirit of the nation, which is greater and grander than that of the greatest hero among us. "We are not cotton-spinners all," and we never were. We are not, one might add, "free-traders" all, and we never were, even though all our "poets" bowed to its spirit. There is in the British spirit the realisation of a destiny from God, a work for the world which Britain alone can perform, the spirit of a people called by God to be an imperial ruling race. We must rule. It is in our blood, and the cotton-spinner may shriek in vain as to the "expense." He does not pay it, and no gold can do so.

Carlyle towers far above Cobdenism, just as the spirit of Britain always towers above her parliamentary talking apparatus with its party divisions. No British Parliament ever ruled India, and no British Parliament will ever rule a British Empire. But the spirit of our race will accomplish what we have long ceased to expect or even desire from Parliament.

In truth, Carlyle's is the voice most insistent of all on the great truth that "righteousness alone exalteth a nation." That is to say, Carlyle demands

that the truth shall be acted upon as a reality of British life, and not as a shibboleth of the platform. Carlyle is resolute in calling upon us as a nation and as individuals to stand true to the highest within us, not pander to our lowest,—to be a ruling race, an Imperial people. We do not conquer territories to trade there, but for nobler and self-sacrificing purposes, as even a hostile world at times grudgingly confesses.

Strange that the most imperial, most proudly British, at its highest and noblest, spirit of our time, summoning us to quit ourselves like men and not tremble to be great in every sense, is the angry, scornful, often almost despairing voice of Carlyle. Why should Carlyle or any British thinker despair when God governs all? So long as we really and truly understand that only so long as British interests *are* the interests of God and all men, so long are these certain to prevail. None can mock God. The British nation will never be so foolish as to try to dissolve God by Act of Parliament. How can Britain, or rather the people thereof, any more than Charles the First, once king and adjudged traitor thereof, expect that God should govern the world for its especial behoof? Wisdom is greater than riches, in life, not alone in literature. Carlyle is deeper than Cobden, and will be found more "practicable."

To sum up, the spirit of the ages, which is greater than and circumscribes the spirit of every age in turn, was in Thomas Carlyle. He is one of the Immortals, and that is why the present attempt has been made to picture him contrasted with the welter round him while he lived, in which in life he appeared to many to be swamped and lost entirely. Never was greater

distortion of the truth. Carlyle was "not for an age, but for all time", like Shakespeare himself. He transcends in thought the best political, religious, and philosophical thinkers of his own age for this reason. A greater spirit had touched him. Carlyle stands high above his contemporaries, and views clearly the real issues at stake for Britain as for all nations, however much his faith in the hero rather than in God may have dimmed his vision for himself. His heart failed him, apparently, as it has failed millions, when he realised the magnitude of the contest and the poverty of the racial spirit of his day. But, if he himself viewed the fortunes of Britain with misgiving, it was just because as he grew older he relied more and more on the heroes and left out God.

For the rest, the reader will remember also that all that most characterises our modern era of "scientific wonders" was "slumbering in the womb of Time" in 1825. The dissatisfied and restless Carlyle roamed a London of strange aspect to our eyes of to-day, without railways, telegraphs, or steam-boats, without policemen even! Decrepit Dogberries still called the hours through the watches of the night, incidentally rousing an angry Carlyle frequently in the process. On the Thames he was viewing with interest the numerous steam-impelled craft he could see plying there, and, as we know, he had intended travelling to town by the "new-fangled" paddle-box steamer which already sailed between Edinburgh and London. This successful attempt to utilise steam-power for sailing vessels was vastly interesting to Carlyle. Already, along with Irving, he had seen craft of the sort on the Clyde, the invention of Miller

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of Dalswinton, Burns's landlord, which, however, had ended in failure. Poor Miller was ruined, and Bell, his joiner, had carried his ideas to Fulton, the New York engineer, before success greeted the great experiment. Thence the steamboat had come back again to its own, but as an American invention. Miller ruined himself and Fulton reaped the reward, but the credit of inventing the steamboat, says Carlyle, was Miller's.

The problem Carlyle had to face in his London uncertainty was not merely one of remaining true to his highest nature, of withstanding the temptation to earn a livelihood by the easiest method within his reach. He found no difficulty in doing that. The problem was the more anxious one, how he was to obtain a livelihood at all. This probably was the reason he felt it safer to face life as a tenant-farmer and literary man combined, than as the latter solely. The latter, it is important to remember, he considered beyond his reach in the London of 1825. Yet his destiny pointed surely towards literature, and in the event Carlyle risked everything on that one cast. Marriage drove him to his own high destiny, though for long black years it was to appear as though it had sealed his doom! We must never forget the far height Carlyle had to climb in the race of life. Men born to wealthy parents, with splendid and effective family influence, "Oxford" men who never had to answer a newspaper advertisement or seek out employment in their lives, worthy though their existence may have been, are really much lesser men in every way than Thomas Carlyle. Men even like Tennyson and Browning, favoured by many influences

and advantages denied to Carlyle, who never had to face the dilemma of doing uncongenial work or starving, though adjudged his equals by our official dispensers of "immortality," are really men of far weaker character and far smaller men. Nature reserves her fiercest furnace for her finest gems. These had gone down in the stern struggle waged by Carlyle.

So Carlyle dallied in London during the winter of 1824, and his first visit to the metropolis stretched out far beyond his wishes. But the time drew ever nearer when he must decide whether to return to agriculture and liberty, or stay in London without faith in his possibilities. He had really very little choice, for he was Carlyle. London, he knew, was not as yet for him, but he would return!

The family at Mainhill suggested at length that Carlyle should settle down near them, at a croft or small farm in their immediate neighbourhood, Hoddam Hill, which chanced to be vacant at that moment. Eventually Alexander, acting for Carlyle, took the farm in his own name, but on his brother's instructions. Alexander was to be the practical farmer in this experiment, Thomas finding the money and assuming all financial responsibility. In fact the scheme was fitted as well as it could be for the advantage of all the family, and all were eager to help. Carlyle was to employ himself with literature, not farming. It was a noble experiment and almost an ideal arrangement. It deserved to succeed.

And so it might have done had not destiny, under the guise of love and Miss Jane Welsh, Haddington, intervened. Much was to befall Carlyle in Hoddam Hill!

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Before he left town Carlyle concluded publishing arrangements, not for a Life of Voltaire, which must have been a subject especially repugnant to him at this time, but for further specimens of German romance, Goethe, Jean Paul, etc. These were not made with Taylor, who had published the *Schiller*, but with the publishers of *Wilhelm Meister*, the sale of which had proved most satisfactory. Carlyle was enabled to leave London with a good heart and as hopeful as it was in his stubborn soul to be. He left in March 1825, having been there since June of the previous year.



## CHAPTER XIV

### HODDAM HILL—1825

"My poor little establishment at Hoddam Hill (close by the Tower of Repentance as if symbolically) . . . a neat compact little farm . . . on which was a prettyish looking cottage for dwelling-place . . . and from the windows such a view as Britain or the world could hardly have matched."—*Reminiscences*.

CARLYLE always looked back on Hoddam Hill as at a memory spot of cheerful brightness and an oasis in the desert of his life; moreover, as a sacred sort of resting-place where the "light divine that never was on sea or land," first shone for him.

"With all its manifold petty troubles this year at Hoddam Hill has a rustic beauty and dignity to me, and now lies like a not-ignoble russet-coated idyll in my memory; one of the quietest on the whole, and perhaps the most triumphantly important of my life."

"This year I found I had conquered all my scepticisms, agonising doubtings, fearful wrestlings with the foul and vile and soul-murdering mud-gods of my epoch; had escaped as from a worse than Tartarus with all its Phlegethons and Stygian quagmires, and was emerging free in spirit into the eternal blue of ether, where, blessed be Heaven! I have for the spiritual part ever since lived."

So Carlyle wrote after his wife's death, when he

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was an old man. It is written, of course, in the Carlyle grand manner, by which unconscious movements Godwards are elevated so as to appear deliberate conscious effort of his own. All Carlyle means is that he had resisted the temptations of London, was gradually coming to perceive that he also had something in him to say, and had now definitely reached the stage farthest from that Edinburgh crisis of 1821, that is to say, he had attained the acquisition of a fixed Credo—"this I believe." The notion that, like other men, he must live under the mud-gods and become a worshipper of mud-gods was now disappearing. He was coming to have faith in himself, and to believe his own creed with the fervour of a Mahomet.

At the moment of his leaving London, however, Carlyle did not put things so hieroglyphically. He complained steadily and painfully of the street noises and his own internal qualms. He appeared headstrong and obstinate merely to the Stracheys, Bullers, and Montagus. Even the wise Irving thought he was doing a foolish action in deliberately leaving London, the literary centre. As a matter of fact he was to return "for good" within ten years; but there is this vital difference, that the Carlyle who returned was a fully developed man mentally and morally, a man who had "found himself," and knew himself, the fearless believer in a new-old creed, and determined to preach it. A very different Carlyle, uncertain of himself for all his diatribes and scorn and not yet fully convinced of anything, bravely turned his back, and scornfully, haughtily, retired from London in March 1825.

Almost the last person he saw when leaving was Irving, the faithful and friendly, and the last ominous memory he retained of their farewell walk together at this time was the remembrance of Irving's call on an "Honourable" Somebody in his dingy office, seeking light on some "prophecy" or new revelation of prophecy from him. "Do you really think," said Carlyle, as they left the office, "that this gentleman can throw any light to you on anything whatever?" "Yes, I do," answered Irving. Not many years later the dying Irving was to lament, in words which were always a gladness and treasure to Carlyle, "I ought to have seen more of Thomas Carlyle and heard him more clearly than I have done." Carlyle's calm, almost sceptical intellect might have saved Irving.

Carlyle went north by way of Birmingham, travelling by the coach. It does not appear whether he stayed with the faithful Badams, but most probably he did so. He lingered a few days in Birmingham, at any rate, writing letters to Miss Welsh and his brother, to the latter to enable him to complete the necessary arrangements for the farm. Mrs. Strachey was not forgetful of him, and he was gratified while in Birmingham by a "beautiful desk" sent him as a present from her. A gold pen accompanied it, which later was handed over to Miss Welsh "to keep for him," like the letter from Goethe. Carlyle now saw Manchester for the first time, and thereafter indulged himself with a walking tour, during which he called on old College friends, one of whom was now a "curate of the Church of England, very stupid and very kind!" The black country, he noted by the

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way, was not then all smoky, but had verdant districts remaining. Through it, and on by Blackburn, Bolton, etc., to Carlisle, he eventually reached Ecclefechan.

In recounting the incidents more than sixty years later, Carlyle has given us a pretty description of his arrival. About two miles from Mainhill, while the coach-horses were being changed—the walking tours never excluded other modes of conveyance—while he was looking out of the coach window, where he sat tired and glad to be so near his people again, Carlyle saw the bright country-girl faces of his two youngest sisters, who had walked out so far to catch the first glimpse of him. Carlyle tends in these Reminiscences to revert at every opportunity to his own clan. This is introduced into his memories of Irving.

When Burns chose Ellisland as his choice of the farms offered him by Mr. Miller, his landlord, the laird or some acute bystander remarked that it was a "poet's choice," not a farmer's. A similar sentiment as to the necessity of beautiful environment was never strong enough in Carlyle or his family to bias their actions. For all the poetry in his soul Carlyle could never have been a poet, but clearly the magnificent panorama of sea and land, from far St. Bees Head to the Moffat Hills, with gleam of water and shade of woods, its sunsets and sunrises impressed him greatly now that the farm was actually his own. The cottage was of the smallest, the home of a crofter rather than a farmer, a proof that when taking it Carlyle had no thought of matrimony in connection with it, if indeed he thought of marriage at all at the moment.

In London, as we know, he had been writing to Miss Welsh discussing his future and immediate prospects with her, and that lady had been very much averse to his leaving the capital. She, too, evidently regarded return as a confession of failure. To her London meant literature, and literature meant London. "I married for ambition," she said in that terrible letter to John Forster. Some salon, it is likely, wherein she, the once humble beauty of Haddington, of ancient lineage, was to be hostess and leader, was her pleasant day-dream at this period. Literature, in short, meant worldly success and little else to Miss Welsh. At first she wrote to Carlyle as though his return in any such fashion as that he actually adopted meant nothing less than the end of all things between them as lovers, and so it might have been perhaps had some more eligible suitor turned up.

Carlyle, however, held to his own path, and strove hard to teach her that literature had a far nobler meaning than London, or all that London had to offer. Outwardly she yielded, but it is to be feared that in spirit she remained unchanged all the days of her life. Since Destiny had sent him into the world, he told her, a poor man's son he must live by the sweat of his brow. Since he had inherited so precarious an internal economy he must study his health and nerves. Above all, he must be mindful of his soul. No people had been so kind to him as his own people, rustic though they were. He could live nowhere else so cheaply as in the country. Literature, he argued, could not guarantee him his bread and butter in London; but frugality and

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farming might together make up what literature alone was not able to supply.

Miss Welsh had yielded when she saw that Carlyle would act as he thought best, whether she yielded or not. Perhaps she was the more reconciled to submission, since she could not but admit in her own heart that Carlyle had a far nobler ambition for himself than she had for him! It is not the common lot that the woman of a man's idolatry advises him to do the meaner thing. In general the woman, and especially the wife, "holds high the target," lifts up the guiding light. But sometimes it is not so, and among the heroes it is almost invariably not so by the very conditions of the case and their own superiority. The world forgets that its heroes are often actually handicapped by the circumstance.

Miss Welsh wrote complacently that Carlyle was her good angel arming her against evil. So in truth he was. But could Carlyle have returned the compliment?

After her sudden death, so swiftly snatched from his gaze, Carlyle could hardly be expected to be callous enough to weigh correctly his responsibilities and hers. Carlyle was a chivalrous man, and above all he was the man, the stronger, the protector. It is the creed of the man that he alone shall bear the burden and the blame. He is the responsible head. Carlyle bore it eagerly, but the world should not have been so ready to jump to the conclusion that Carlyle had weighed his responsibilities correctly, and justly and rightly had condemned himself. That could never be. Was it not hard that he who had so many fairy gifts showered on him at birth should

have found one less than most receive in marriage, and had to find his own best angel within himself? Carlyle led his wife in safety across the quicksands of their life, with honour if not with comfort to herself, but she did not aid him where most he needed help, and denied him much human charity and kindness he might have found elsewhere. If only some good woman. . . . But there are a million suppositions, each vainer than another! Shall we not be thankful to Heaven for the Carlyles as they were?

And at last, after all the discussions, here was Carlyle at Hoddam Hill, almost in very despite of Miss Welsh and her light raillery, more in earnest than ever concerning his lofty ambition. Carlyle rode over from Mainhill, where he was staying, to take possession of the cottage on 26th May 1825, having already watched with interest and gratitude the kindly fulfilment of the customary "ploughing," which is the free-will gift of neighbour farmers to all newcomers in that district of Scotland, as in many other places. Carlyle tells us "that he set up his books and bits of implements and lares, and took to doing German romance as my daily work, ten pages daily my stint, which, barring some rare accidents, I faithfully accomplished. Brother Alick was my practical farmer."

His mother and one or other of his sisters "were pretty generally there" to help and supervise the proceedings. Hoddam Hill, indeed, was a farm or croft worked by the Carlyle family as an extension of their own adjoining farm of Mainhill, rather than the farm of Carlyle himself. Everyone understood that Thomas was to be troubled with nothing but

literature. He was not to be annoyed with farming vexations. All the family expected a nameless greatness from the brilliant eldest. Little wonder Carlyle preferred the home of his relations and family to all the other homes he himself acquired; but he honestly did prefer it, even to that superior residence in which sat his own wife toiling cleverly for his comfort. It will be a revelation to our reader to discover how Providence and Miss Welsh and all the circumstances conspired to cheat him of what seemed his fairest destiny, for Carlyle himself, as may well be surmised, had no real desire to change it. Marriage meant extra burden and nothing else, and Carlyle knew it. How, then, did he come to marry? We shall see that shortly. Froude has not only accorded Carlyle his share of blame for the marriage, if blame there be. He has accused him of alone being at fault. His marriage *made* Carlyle, but not as Froude or his wife supposed, and in no other way than by the necessities it occasioned, revealing the pure gold of his nature which otherwise must have lain undiscovered. It actually made the task the harder, but it alone could produce the noble fruit of self-sacrifice. Without it Carlyle had toiled for himself, not for others, and his reward had been proportionally the poorer. Froude's eloquent biography has in truth entangled Carlyle in a complexity of circumstance beyond belief, which the actual facts do not warrant.

At Hoddam, Carlyle had once more his riding horse, the famous "Larry," whose acquaintance we have already made at Kinnaird House. Carlyle was a loose, careless rider and had many narrow



escapes through heedlessness and horse nervousness. Larry indeed was nearly the end of him on more than one occasion. After any serious accident or catastrophe, narrowly averted, the horse of the day was disposed of as a rule, more at the solicitation of anxious relatives than from the least fear in the constitutionally brave Carlyle. Larry nevertheless survived not a few of those dubious exhibitions. He was the "horse of Genius," according to his master's wife, and he lasted well into the Craigen-puttock period. He died there, we learn from Froude's narrative, a victim to hard work and his master's narrow circumstances, to the Carlyle efforts to make that hill farm pay. Died of "overwork" sounds harsh nevertheless, for Carlyle was fond of horses and all animals, a fact he mentions as a prominent characteristic of "Wotton Reinfred." The result cannot have been foreseen.

Carlyle's brother John had just completed his medical course at the University and had obtained his degree. Dr. Carlyle had not decided whither or even how to direct his further way, and at this time was most frequently with his brother at Hoddam, a welcome and cheerful guest, who owed practically everything to his generous host. John seems to have been by far the most light-hearted and genial of this famous family, the family wit always and cheerful companion, yet apparently earnest as the others to "get on." Naturally he looked to his eldest brother rather than to his father both for advancement and influence, social, mental and moral. Carlyle had sent him to the University and guided his education, mostly at his own cost. Through his brother John

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obtained the snug appointment to be mentioned later.

In the end both Alexander and he repaid the free gifts of their generous brother, yet the money returned to Carlyle *after* he had won the fight. The fact is to be noted that Carlyle carried not only his own financial burdens, but a little later his wife's also, and the gratuitous onerous burden of all he had advanced to the assistance of two brothers at least. These pressed most heavily in the great crisis of his life which culminated at Craigenputtock and led to his final departure for London. Had he not carried these extra burdens one does not see that his own financial liability need ever have cost him a thought. But he would not have been Carlyle had he failed to assume them.

It was really an amazing household which gathered in the little home at Hoddam Hill under the roof of Thomas and Alexander Carlyle, farmers there. Neighbours must have marvelled, must have envied and perhaps felt aggrieved at the amazing success which had attended old James and Margaret Carlyle. Mr. Hall Caine went to Ecclefechan a year or two after Carlyle's death, and wrote bitterly that the Ecclefechan folk hated Carlyle. "The very air festers above his grave." The statement of course is nonsense literally and figuratively. But the man understands little of village life, either in Scotland or elsewhere, who does not know (by bitter experience if in no other way) that neighbours are little likely to love such strong, self-contained, self-reliant, self-sufficient, proud folk as the Carlyles were, from grim old James Carlyle the father down to the prim,

decided little "Jean the Crow" or the gentler Janet who brought up the rear.

What did Hoddam Hill, with its tenant studying Goethe and corresponding with him, with that tenant's lofty ambitions and deep deep thoughts, care for Ecclefechan? And what did Ecclefechan care for him? The "Doctor" may have been more popular. The brothers and sisters set a little library going once at Ecclefechan, but if they got their own use out of it they probably thought their neighbours could equally help themselves without any assistance of theirs. Had they offered any it had probably been refused, the derision of the village; since they offered none they were "proud"! It is the common dilemma of their situation. Men whispered how well they had succeeded, and, to be sure, some grudged their success. At this very moment too, in spite of all their reticence, it would be darkly whispered, to the accompaniment of cunning leers and hints, that Thomas Carlyle was engaged to marry a "great heiress" of good, social landowning rank. How could the Carlyles be popular!

Hoddam Hill is one of the landmarks in Carlyle's life, and the development or unfolding of his nature, which first definitely took shape while he was resident tenant of this humble farm, is more notable than at any other period. Yet the biographer is more non-plussed at this time than another to know how to picture Carlyle and his inner life there.

At the moment he was living the life of all others most near his own heart. He loved Scots rural cottage ways, the busy kitchen with the great kettle swung over the long peat fire, the settle—the hams

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hung from the rafter hooks above—where family meals were partaken of without ceremony and in comfort among his own folk. Carlyle was not only the acknowledged master here but was reverently recognised as a superior being, above and apart from the little community he swayed. No matter how he growls at times, Carlyle has ever the “guid conceit o’ himsel’” which is proverbially a Scots national failing. He loved his mother and her hearth beyond all created beings and places; but he loved them none the less, we may be sure, for the never-failing, spontaneous flow of loving sympathy which manifested itself in a voluntary devotion which was almost slavery to his lightest wish. “‘Deed, Tom, but ye’re gey ill to deal wi’,” his mother expostulated on one occasion, when there was simply “no pleasing him.” He was in deep despondency, sick and fretful, and the good lady was evidently for the moment nearing the end of her almost limitless resources. Froude, it would appear (or “as is alleged”), read the words “gey ill to *live* wi’”; but coming from a mother in either case the difference can be but slight if appreciable at all. At such times, beyond all manner of doubt, not only Thomas Carlyle, heavy-laden wayfarer, but all men in like case are, very naturally, “gey ill to live wi’,” whether wife or mother have to undertake the responsibility.

At Hoddam Carlyle found the kindly encouraging words of Goethe, the greatest writer then living, come very near his heart. They brought him the sustaining feeling, that though isolated and alone he was not unregarded. Sympathy, the conviction that he was now treading the same narrow and difficult way

which Goethe himself had travelled before him, and his almost magical insight into Goethe's native tongue brought Carlyle nearer to Goethe than almost any one, German or English, has ever reached. In the Hoddam fields Carlyle lay and read and pondered and thought concerning Goethe and the other great German men of letters, and grew to spiritual manhood so, more amazingly than at any other period of his career. Doubt, the old bogey which we the heirs of Carlyle have had to conquer in our turn, the only weakness Carlyle or any man has need to beware of, fled finally from his mind, never to return in any strength or with any hope of victory.

In reality Carlyle had been sorely tempted to remain in London. His bitterness proves it. For a time it seemed so doubtful whether he had not practically committed suicide. He had deliberately turned his back on London and all that London implied, but himself alone knew what it had cost him to be true to himself and the teaching of his masters. As his mental powers strengthened in this favourable environment at Hoddam, and he recognised more credibly each succeeding day that he also had a message which not even Goethe had delivered, Carlyle experienced a renewal of power. He was beginning at length to realise his own strength.

The *Life of Schiller* and Translator's Preface prefixed to *Wilhelm Meister* proved that already, long before Hoddam days, Carlyle had left behind his callow youth. The borrowed thought of the *Encyclopædia* lay now very far behind him. The actual work he accomplished at Hoddam does not adequately reveal either the processes or the wealth

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of his mind at the time. At the best he felt that the work at Hoddam—the actual production—was “pot-boiling” work, an agreeable and profitable way of earning a livelihood. It was indeed the only way open to him in the world of literature. He had as yet found nothing to say, but he knew now he would have something to say by and by. Had he not been born poor there need be little doubt Carlyle would not have taken to literature. At the beginning he felt no call to literary work. All great men prove their greatness by special qualities doubtless in one direction, but in whatever direction circumstances may dictate their greatness would be equally apparent. One might almost say Carlyle became a literary man because he found himself unable to obtain a livelihood in any of the more familiar ways. His inspiration might have found an outlet in action had he been born wealthier. Latter-day complainings suggest that Carlyle would have chosen Parliament as his sphere of labour, a sphere for which he was manifestly unfitted.

He could not write unless and until he was “inspired”; that is, had something to say, and could find no rest till he had said it. It was no *voluntary* condition, as Froude would almost at times seem to imply, that Carlyle could not write like some men about anything and everything. Unless he had something definite to say, Carlyle held there was no call on him or any man to say anything. It was no excuse that money must be earned by writing something. Without inspiration clearly Carlyle would not have been a literary man at all. He tried hard even at Hoddam to be a poet, to write verse. He

failed. He tried in various directions indeed, including even the novel he came afterwards to despise. It took him long to discover what he had to say, and at first inspiration came in dubious guise. He was always a great deal more than a literary man. He was a great man in every sense of the word.

How significant was the mental change felt now at Hoddam! How different from that of the "Rue de l'enfer," Leith Walk in 1821! "The sound of the Kirk bell once or twice on Sunday mornings (from Hoddam Kirk a mile in the plains below me) was strangely touching, like the departing voice of eighteen hundred years." More pregnant words were never written!

But the great event of the Hoddam Hill period after all was the visit of Miss Jane Welsh to the Carlyle family. The engagement had been divulged in letters to Mrs. Carlyle, his mother, from the first. Mrs. Welsh, her mother, knew also of this very natural result of such prolonged intimacy. But nothing had yet been said publicly; nothing in fact had yet been decided. Neither party was bound unless by their own desire. The social circumstances of the two families being what they were it was from Mrs. Welsh naturally, rather than from the Carlyle side, that any objection was to be looked for, or any objection came.

Yet could the parties have realised facts the case would have been otherwise. Old Mrs. Carlyle was a good woman and deeply religious; she was an excellent mother; but she possessed her share of respect for rank and social position. Possessed of the keenest maternal anxiety for her children's

promotion in the social scale, she was fondly desirous of seeing them get on, and the marriage seemed extremely desirable doubtless to her rustic mind. Moreover Miss Welsh was her son's choice.

We shall find that Miss Welsh took all precautions to exhibit herself in the fairest light towards the parent Carlyles, and indeed the whole Carlyle family, at this time. Unconsciously, while still avowedly ignorant of the true state of her feelings, and dubious beyond all doubt of the worldly wisdom of her choice, she shows that her whole heart and soul is in the affair. Where levity, "light raillery," love of rank, hauteur, family pride, refinement (all of which she possessed) would have brought matters to a head very quickly in whatever direction she desired, or would have ended all possibility of marriage, Miss Welsh took the utmost pains to show herself in the most agreeable light, was keenly appreciative of approval and captured by storm the hearts of the old couple, and especially it would appear that of the good father.

Froude in his eloquent but uncomprehending biography has detailed for us the circumstances which preceded this memorable visit of Jane Welsh, but he has hopelessly (though quite innocently and unconsciously) biased his reader by the opinions he has already recorded of the vast difference in social status between Jane Welsh and Thomas Carlyle. In part we have found occasion to allude to this. We return to it now in order to reconsider their positions anew.

The death of Dr. Welsh had brought about a profound change, inclining to an absolute cessation of the fancied superiority wrongly accorded to Miss



Welsh by Carlyle's biographer. Froude was clearly captivated and fascinated by Mrs. Carlyle from the first; and prolonged intimacy led him to take ever a higher and nobler view of that sorely tried lady. He credits her in sober earnest with almost all the attributes Carlyle's remorseful love enshrined about her. This is itself the highest proof of and tribute to Mrs. Carlyle's charm, but is not demonstration of the theory Froude tried to establish or of the facts on which that theory is based. We must therefore reconstruct for ourselves Miss Welsh's position in the summer of 1826 when she made her fateful visit to the Carlyles and accepted Thomas Carlyle as her future husband.

"I married for ambition," is the tale she wrote John Forster (her husband's friend!) and the story she must have hinted to James Anthony Froude. In the main it is true. Ambition, the keen desire to marry a man of genius likely to make a great name in the world and to become famous, was undoubtedly the prime ruling motive which rendered a marriage with Carlyle even palatable to the keen-witted, bright, fascinating, lovely-eyed young lady of Haddington. Without her belief in his genius she would never have looked at Thomas Carlyle, or could have overlooked his personal deficiencies in the way of dress and deportment. Carlyle would have remained "beneath her." Nor is it unjust to her memory or unfair to her shrewd intellect to suggest that, had her father lived, she would (quite probably) never have found herself able to overlook the disparity of social rank and reputed wealth between the Welshes and the Carlyles. The death of Dr. Welsh had changed everything

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for her. The proud little beauty, made much of if not spoilt by her father, proud of her family and their "landed interest," imagining too that the family possessed wealth sufficient for their social position *ad eternitatem*, had awakened to the stern realities which brought her mother and herself one grade nearer the working or "servile" class to which Irving and Carlyle belonged. For that is all the difference in the ultimate. One class lives regally and refinedly on wealth already accumulated while the other has nothing saved and earns sufficient for daily wants from day to day, month to month, or year to year. In the course of centuries that difference may grow very great and very real; in the case of the small Scots lairds or landowners it may be felt very acutely, and Miss Welsh did apparently feel it very much and stated the fact (even to the man she loved) very plainly. But in her case it had been very greatly reduced of late, if not annihilated, by the fact that Dr. Welsh was a "country practitioner" of medicine and had died young, leaving little or no money for the alleged difference of status being maintained any longer.

To put the matter plainly, as Miss Welsh must have seen it, she had but three courses open to her in 1826. She could elect to remain single; though she had impulsively handed over all her income to her mother during that lady's life. She would live with her mother in that case on loving and fairly independent terms the dull, dreary, rural life of ladies of straitened estate in country towns which have witnessed their earlier triumphs. Miss Welsh knew all about that, and implored Carlyle to take her out of

Haddington. Her soul recoiled with loathing from such a life, as the souls of all generous, high-spirited people must do.

Secondly, Miss Welsh could accept the hand of any suitor who might present himself under the limitation that he must be possessed of sufficient means to maintain her, at least in a position similar to that in which she had been born and her father had accustomed her. She hinted at this to Carlyle, but Carlyle was obtuse and stupidly honourable in these matters. She could marry where marriage was offered, but she had no means of her own to assist the man of her choice till her mother died. Till then she would be dependent on her husband utterly, even for food and clothes.

Thirdly, though there is no warrant for the supposition that it was in her mind at any time as a *last* or even third resort, she could marry Thomas Carlyle.

Froude's airy castle disappears. For few maidens but would elect to choose the third of these modes as the best. It is, however, no fault of Froude. The biographer heard the "social position" argument from Mrs. Carlyle herself, and in her mind, clear and sceptical though it was, intellect and sense of proportion were overthrown by the intense love and reverence she felt always for her dead father. So intense was that love that she lies buried beside him, far away from the Thomas Carlyle who carried her poor "ambition" to such boundless lengths. By her choice of grave she seems to emphasise this difference of social status for all eternity. The visitor to both cannot but note the difference between the fine old Abbey, the "Lamp of the Lothians," with the Welsh

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tombstone in its pride of place, and that unkempt village graveyard at Ecclefechan. Yet the world's shrine is the latter.

If Carlyle ever heard the "social status" argument he was too scornful of it to contradict. Perhaps he came to believe in it himself! So let it be! But for Carlyle's sake and the sake of truth it is necessary that the facts should be stated plainly. After all, the visitor to the grave in Haddington Abbey goes there for Carlyle's sake rather than for the sake of "that bright existence" who brought so much help and comfort to him and yet has so miserably dimmed his name. Her letters and their extreme, almost guilty revelation of private domestic discord and unrepentant candour have brought about what the man's own lack of self-control may have provoked but scarcely deserved.

When Miss Welsh came to Hoddam she came as no "heiress" save in popular report. Carlyle knew the truth at last. She came as a young lady almost of rank and fashion (to the simple villagers), a friend of great social importance and refinement (to the Carlyles), and as the cleverest, fairest, best maiden on earth to poor love-stricken Carlyle himself.

To herself she was not any of these. Clear, sceptical, ironical, intellectual, she had an inordinate ambition for literary fame. Sceptical of the extent of her own powers she hoped to link herself to Carlyle, but again Froude has admitted us to her most secret confidence. He has been bitterly assailed for this, but with that, and the mistrust of which it is the symbol, we have nothing to do. Our concern, like that of Froude, is for the truth. Let the truth be

told if any tale is to be told at all. The facts which Froude revealed bear the impress of truth, because curiously, as we have already stated, they supply the reason for Carlyle's (and much more for Mrs. Carlyle's) intense dislike of the well-intentioned Mrs. Montagu, expressed in the bitterest passages even in the bitter *Reminiscences*. Carlyle, as we know now, did not always share that bitter grudge against Mrs. Montagu. It would have been better that he never should have shared it. In his novel *Wotton Reinfred* Jane Welsh appears as "Jane Montagu," a fact which almost seems to hint that Carlyle wrote it now or had written it between 1823 and now. In the *Reminiscences* the poor lady is always held up to the most brutal contempt and derision. We know already what this lady had done.

Irving had told his life's Romance (for such it was, just as Carlyle's had been his love for Margaret Gordon) to Mrs. Montagu, his kind friend and patroness. Irving was vain, soft-hearted, and not hard-headed. In any event, whatever excuse is available for him, he was foolish and faithless enough to reveal the fact of his love for Miss Welsh and Miss Welsh's deep love for him, and to pour all the silly story into Mrs. Montagu's sympathetic ears. Mrs. Montagu was immensely impressed, both by Irving's allegiance to duty rather than passion and by Miss Welsh's heroic determination to compel Irving to perform that duty. So impressed was she by the tale that, as we have seen, she instantly introduced herself by letter to Miss Welsh, and tried to begin a promising emotional sort of correspondence with her. As may be imagined, Miss Welsh gave but a cool

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response. She was amazed, shocked, and angered by Irving's breach of honourable reticence.

It is at this time her former love for Irving must have changed into contempt and hate, for it was during Carlyle's first London visit she was betrayed into the bitterest expressions against Irving, expressions to which Carlyle responded, half deprecating their bitterness and half applauding as a lover, so far as his own deep debt to Irving could tolerate attacks on his oldest friend at all. Carlyle regretted the bitterness which argued, he may have thought, a hard nature. Afterwards Miss Welsh regretted that she had not better controlled her feelings. But no suspicion as to the true state of the case had up till now crossed Carlyle's open, honest mind.

Mrs. Montagu had heard (again most probably through Irving) that Miss Welsh was engaged to marry Carlyle. Irving may have instigated Mrs. Montagu, for he had a pretty high notion of what a love for such a man as himself must mean; or her own notions of philanthropy may have induced her to write to Miss Welsh a letter of mingled amazement and reproach! Write some such letter at all events she did. Miss Welsh saw at once, as any one would, not only the intolerable nuisance of this public discussion of her private affairs, but its danger to Carlyle and herself. What would Carlyle say? She had never breathed a word to him on the subject. Characteristically and as any honest girl would act, she bravely sent Mrs. Montagu's letter to Carlyle himself, owned her fault and admitted her secretiveness.

For the first time too she revealed to Carlyle that she did indeed love him, if not quite as much as

she had ever loved Irving. We never love so passionately as when we are like to lose the object of our devotion. Miss Welsh had received a fright, and immediately facts assumed their true significance. As Froude says, "he had never been so dear to her as at that moment when she was in danger of losing his affection, and what was still more precious to her his respect." Strange that neither Froude nor Mrs. Carlyle should, even then, have read these facts correctly.

At that moment Carlyle appeared very desirable indeed in spite of the difference in status! Miss Welsh practically surrendered at once, and almost humbly awaited Carlyle's decision. She would marry him to-morrow if he wished. She knew now she could not bear to lose him.

So far all has been as it so often has been, and Miss Welsh has acted in the only way a high-principled lady would act. No great credit need be attached to her action towards her lover, though Froude seems to find it very lofty. It was the least Carlyle had a right to expect. She could not doubt his answer very deeply. She knew he loved her, but she knew also he could live very well without her and had said so!

Carlyle acted nobly, as Carlyle always did. Not even her bitterest disappointment seems to have provoked her, at any time, to allege meanness or ignobility against him, even when writing to her dearest sympathisers. A record there was (now burned, but not by Carlyle) in his wife's diary of alleged violence or wrist-snatching. That record was foolishly destroyed. But Carlyle left it, like all other

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records, and blazoned these abroad of his own deliberate choice. He had in truth nothing to fear, for a hundred innocent, almost laudable explanations of so hasty and rude an act even as this should suggest themselves to every honest mind.

Carlyle's answer to Miss Welsh was that "there could be no question of forgiveness between her and him." He answered as any man in love would answer who sincerely desired the woman to be his wife for herself alone, or for the qualities and virtues his mind conferred upon her, and thought her offence a little thing compared with the pain of losing her. Miss Welsh responded suitably, and marriage more or less immediate was willingly and even gratefully arranged for by both parties.

Miss Welsh was on one of her visits to Templand, the home of her mother's father, at this time, and as Templand was no great distance from Ecclefechan she now wrote that while there she would (with Carlyle's consent!) pay her introductory visit to his people. Carlyle of course was delighted. He was even jubilant, and the fair sinner is soon ludicrously the "suffering angel."

Miss Welsh apparently was not delighted, and though the marriage had been hastened (proposed almost one might say) by her own eager wish, the lady tormented her lover with her scruples as to its feasibility. Yet she was determined also to win the affections of the Carlyle family and to prove herself a good match even for its most brilliant member. The visit was intended to prove there was to be no turning back. She would show them all she was well worthy of his love.



She did so. She won the hearts of all. But the beginning of the visit was unpromising. By some misinformation the young lady proceeded to another destination than that agreed upon, and while Carlyle waited impatiently but in vain, hoping against hope at the agreed-on meeting-place, Miss Welsh, from the temporary resting-place of a convenient farmhouse, wrote him a brief explanatory note requesting him to ride over for her at his earliest dispatch. He quickly proceeded to her relief, and all ended with smiles and laughter.

Old Mr. Carlyle dressed and shaved himself in order to welcome her respectfully, as the old-world, courteous peasant always does for ladies, though Froude and Mrs. Carlyle apparently considered this a special mark of grace in James Carlyle. In him perhaps it was, but not among the rustics or shepherds of the Borders.

To the old mother Miss Welsh was careful to show the "economical side" which was indubitably a pronounced trait of her character. She proved that she was fit to be a poor man's wife since that was like to be her fate. The exhibition may well have warmed even the proud and anxious maternal heart of Carlyle's mother. That it did so is evident from Carlyle's own raptures in the *Reminiscences*, written long years after. But it proved shrewdness and anxiety to please even more than these nobler qualities Carlyle was so affectionately proud of. That Miss Welsh was not all smiles and laughter appears from his own confession at the same time and in the same place. The outlook disheartened her, and she was never at the least pains to hide the fact from any one.

To the honest and love-sick Carlyle, naturally her action possessed a nobility the world has failed to observe. That Froude, misled by Mrs. Carlyle herself, should have written as he did and blamed Carlyle for an action he could not without ignominy have avoided, is the true cause of a great deal of misconception and much harsh criticism of Carlyle. Mrs. Carlyle took her own ingrained but radically false "social view" of these proceedings always, and hated Mrs. Montagu as the true cause of the "catastrophe." She never forgave the lady, no more than she ever (apparently) forgave Mrs. Irving, her determined supplanter, as in her secret heart she may have considered her.

"Had I married Irving there would have been no tongues," Mrs. Carlyle is reported to have said on one occasion. There would not, because that mocking spirit could have been of nothing but service to the precariously balanced, enthusiastic Irving. Irving would have been all the better, never the worse, for her presence continually beside him. She would have been the corrector of his obvious tendencies, a drag to his vanity, and a wise worldly counsellor always, where, if anywhere, a wise counsellor was terribly to seek. Thousands of Carlyle's admirers have added to her words, "nor any tongues about the Carlyles"; for her own letters are the true cause of the trouble.

One may guess that Carlyle would have acted more wisely to have remained single, but Carlyle himself never thought so. The great are always lonely, but Carlyle was even more than ordinarily a lonely man, one of those whose souls are as the stars that dwell apart. Like Swift, he did not share our

common human desire, the aim which seemed so grand to Burns—

“To mak’ a happy fireside clime  
For weans and wife,  
Is the true pathos and sublime  
Of human life.”

Often as he must have repeated these words, the sentiment expressed in them held no place whatever in Carlyle’s mind. Happiness he scorned, both for himself and, somewhat extravagantly and gratuitously, for all others. His creed took no account of it. Man was sent into the world, according to Carlyle, for vastly more important ends, and the humble but absolutely needful one whether of maintaining his own existence or perpetuating that of others is not admitted at all. Carlyle regards the spiritual only, to the exclusion of the human. Catholicism showed a like tendency in monasticism—nay, Christianity shows the same in the Perfect Life. The old Hebrew religion he found incredible was more humble and more human than Carlyle’s own, because it at least did attribute plain logical duty to the direct commandment of God.

How important the infra-spiritual or frankly human is the Oriental never as a rule forgets but the Western ascetic is always tending to deny altogether. Carlyle’s own marriage was all too cruelly to make this once more manifest to the world that thinks as well as to the world that pries and jeers. There would have been heard no tongues on the Carlyle miseries had children gladdened the existence of Jane Welsh or even occupied her time on earth. Worries, discords, even “demon fowls,” are forcibly pressed

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into a proper proportion in the presence of greater problems, more deserving of human attention and human spirituality.

Miss Welsh came, and saw, and conquered. She noted the clever daintiness of Carlyle's sister, who spread a favoured possession in the shape of a new shawl over a deal table, the better to convert that into a dressing-table. Miss Welsh noted also the favoured "Jean the Crow" or black-haired, the readier perhaps that she may have considered her a namesake. She observed the child's natural abilities and proposed kindly little plans, which later she faithfully carried out (so far as lay in her power), for Jean's future education and rise in status. In consequence, Miss Welsh must have revealed herself at this time to the Carlyles as the most desirable, most refined and fascinating of all possible daughters-in-law or sisters-in-law; besides being already what she was, "Tom's" choice, whose word was law, not only in practice but gratefully, almost venerationally, from the whole heart, for every member of the Carlyle clan.

The young lovers rode together in the usual manner, Carlyle on "Larry" and Miss Welsh—perhaps not so accustomed as he to the saddle, for all her "superior social status"—on whatever animal could be provided. Carlyle told her, in some of the most poetical of all his letters, how he would show her "Kirkconnell Churchyard and Fair Helen's grave." Fair Helen of the ballad, who "died for me." "I will take you to the top of Burnswark and wander with you up and down the woods and lanes and moors. Earth, sea, and air are open to us here

as well as anywhere. The water of Milk was flowing through its simple valley as early as the brook Siloa, and poor Repentance Hill is as old as Caucasus itself. There is a majesty and mystery in Nature, take her as you will. . . . Night, the ancient mother, follows him (the sun) with her diadem of stars ; and Arcturus and Orion call *me* into the Infinitudes of space as they called the Druid priest or the shepherd of Chaldaea. Bright creatures ! how they gleam like spirits through the shadows of innumerable ages from their thrones in the boundless depths of heaven.

‘Who ever gazed upon them shining,  
And turned to earth without repining,  
Nor wished for wings to fly away  
To mix with their ethereal ray.’”

Carlyle was not altogether wrong in pursuing the art of verse-writing, for he had much poetry in his stern, uncompromising nature. But he had “no ear,” as plain folk say, and melody came not. Yet now and then, as here, he comes near expressing himself melodiously in the trammels of verse.

When the long rides along lovely country lanes, long walks under the sympathetic stars, and continuous, loving companionship came to an end and the first glow of courtship was almost over, Carlyle accompanied Miss Welsh to Dumfries, riding there as her escort, as he himself expresses it, enjoying her “melodious” talk. Doleful that talk too evidently was to one already so depressed, for all his obstinacy, inward ambition and determination. The marriage was to take place as soon as might be. “This thought always, too,” Miss Welsh suitably impressed on Carlyle during this eventful backward-journeying

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to Dumfries. "My darling, in noble silence, getting so weary of dull Haddington." A plain, unflattering testimonial, which tremendously delighted Carlyle, as like thoughts have ever tremendously delighted lovers since the beginning of time. It was not, however, as Carlyle thought, distastefulness for single blessedness; but dull discontent with Haddington, now grown worse than indifferent since the death of her father and the curtailment of the privileges and luxuries of social status.

Miss Welsh was now twenty-five. Never beautiful, she possessed lovely eyes, as all observers seem to agree, with irregular features, just a touch of the scornful marking the lips, even in her finest, early portrait. Fascinating, piquant, sharp-tongued, impulsive, witty, and well-educated, Miss Welsh, left alone in the world, with a mother she never "got on with" any more than Carlyle's mother found her son easy to "deal with," must have realised that it was time her ambitions progressed if they were not to regress. Unconsciously and consciously she considered Carlyle, as what in the event he proved himself right royally to be, by far the most hopeful and promising of all her suitors; and now that Mrs. Montagu's rash act had precipitated the solution which ambition had always if not attractively dangled before her eyes, Miss Welsh made her choice and set her teeth to the task, already somewhat unpalatable to herself, as is evident enough, before disobliging relatives spoke even a word of surprise or disapproval on the subject.

Mrs. Welsh took the affair very badly, or at least her daughter, with a curious and characteristic want

of reticence, which has proved as fatal to her husband's memory as to her mother's chance then of happiness with this proposed son-in-law, informed Carlyle that her mother was very eloquent and persuasive *against* the match. One can scarcely fathom adequate motive for so curious an action. Boldly, and obviously without even mitigation of appearances, she told Carlyle that her mother dreaded his bad temper, was afraid that alone would make the pair of them unhappy, and she does not fail to accredit to the mother all the "social" arguments against the marriage she herself shared and had indeed often expressed in plainest speech to poor, long-suffering, proud Carlyle himself! If she meant to marry Carlyle and live with him, her letter now was both cruel to Carlyle and to her mother and fatal to all possible chance of these two ever living together. If she did not mean to marry him, it was not her nature thus to shuffle off responsibility. Whatever her motive, she discussed her mother coolly, scientifically, remorselessly, asking with real or sarcastic humility what course Carlyle would advise her to adopt.

Carlyle replied very sensibly and with wonderful kindness and sympathy, but also with rich, unconscious humour, remarking as he did so the limits he (the young husband to be) would propose for his intended wife's compliance with a mother's whims and counsel. Very sensible they are, but also very, very obvious. Carlyle, rightly, possessed a sensible dread of the possible publication of his "love-letters" or hers. He forbade it, and only incidentally to other important matters have any of these been revealed. Carlyle, who desired

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that the truth, all the truth, and nothing but the truth should be told about all his Heroes, obviously dreaded the publication of certain particular letters of vast import to character and truth, either because he considered the world should not be told what these letters contained, or because he could not tolerate it should ever learn the truth about himself. The plain, easy way to prevent publication he, curiously, did not adopt. He could not, or would not, burn them, and, like his prohibitions or desires for prohibition of any biography of himself, his uncertainty or indulgence in a not discreditable weakness brought a thousand undeserved humiliations, difficulties, and troubles on his hapless biographer. Probably all the letters will be published some day, not improbably by Carlyle's representatives under pressure of circumstance. They should have been published long ago, as everything ought to be (under responsible editing) if biography or life of any Hero is attempted at all; which in turn is as inevitable as it is advisable. Men live not for themselves alone, as Carlyle indeed taught more insistently than any. The grave is sound proof, thank God!

Carlyle in his reply to this amazing letter reckoned that he was not a "bad-tempered man," as assuredly he does not appear to have been. He was not even "ill-tempered," he considered, and such temper as he showed was occasioned by easily preventable causes! The poor mother is discussed more kindly by the "peasant" Carlyle than her own daughter had seen fit to discuss her. Carlyle always liked Mrs. Welsh, who, poor lady, seems to have "got on" excellently with Carlyle, but never for long



with her own daughter. Carlyle's lofty worship of his own mother must have received high warrant from his wife's sceptical criticism of hers!

Simply, it was not right, or fair, or creditable to Miss Welsh for her thus to discuss her mother with Carlyle at all. Can it have been she ardently desired that all possibility of their living together should be prevented? A cynical person, or even one not very cynical, might suppose so, and with reason. To the public eye a marriage with Carlyle would appear in a light a great deal more favourable to Carlyle's means and wife-supporting capacity if the mother did *not* reside with the young couple; but, on the other hand, the most sensible arrangement for the comfort of all concerned, and still more for the meagre joint income of all concerned, was this very plan so ruthlessly annihilated. It occasions less surprise to us, candidly, than it did to Froude, to learn that Carlyle duly spurned the notion of the married pair living together with Mrs. Welsh when that sensible notion flitted later into the consciousness of her ambitious daughter. Miss Welsh did not really wish anything of the kind, and Carlyle knew it.

The visit passed, and Carlyle remained well pleased (as he did indeed to the end of his days) with the result of it. Marriage was arranged for the autumn, both parties suddenly becoming alive at length to its serious and irrevocable reality. The Welsh households, we may be sure, held up their hands in horror at the alleged impending catastrophe, and poor little Miss Welsh herself, far from reassured that Carlyle could keep her, doubted whether he possessed the needful capacity to earn his own liveli-

hood! At the worst, both must have resolved they would emigrate, a course which is always likely to be the last unless it be the outcome either of youthful restlessness or precocious wisdom.

The pity is that Miss Welsh remained all her life convinced that she had married beneath her and had married for ambition. The fact that she so impressed her alleged grievances on Froude is a heavy charge against her and proof that, in her heart, she too had no dubiety on the nature of the *mésalliance*. It was not in her nature to consider this matter fairly. Some snobbish grievance against Fate, and in lesser degree against Carlyle, remained with her to the end in spite of all the triumphs towards the close. She is alleged to have possessed one graver still against her husband, and Froude apparently believed he had discovered it. He hinted at it in his biography, and after his death his children published it in their father's defence. The pity is that Froude waited till such time as proof or disproof had become impossible, a fact he admitted when he penned his conclusions. No lover of justice or admirer of Carlyle can permit a vague unproved charge of this description to bear against the memory of Carlyle when Froude himself was careful to exclude Carlyle from blame, a thing patently impossible if the facts really were as Froude suspected. Once more perhaps the mischief lay in misconceptions or angry husband-denunciations of Mrs. Carlyle, or even more probably in erroneous inference drawn by Miss Jewsbury, her confidante, from loose, unconsidered statements or hints made by the wife, which appeared to lend a seeming corroboration to the unworthy suspicions already

formulated by too curious and very fleshly acquaintances.

Miss Welsh's visit to Ecclefechan was a sunny, pleasant episode in Carlyle's life, but the tenancy of Hoddam Hill, however triumphant for literary and personal success, as an experiment for the solution of Carlyle's main difficulty was to become a fiasco. Perhaps the Carlyles found the croft too heavily rented and otherwise unsuitable, and they at least boasted later that they secured a far finer farm in Scotsbrig. Hoddam Hill, like Mainhill, the property of the same landlord, at any rate was condemned by the Carlyles on various pretexts, one cannot now know with what justice save from Carlyle's own clan-biased reminiscences.

There must always be an additional possibility of eventual disagreement and rupture between proprietor and tenant when the opposing rôles are occupied by two such men as Thomas Carlyle and General Sharpe. Carlyle's own naive account of the relations between his landlord and himself reveals a state of armed neutrality at the best, irritating quarrelling by letter, and at least one highly amusing and characteristic personal rencounter. The average village laird or squire is not disposed to yield equality even to an incipient Carlyle. He is grandly patronising if anything, choleric and hasty when brought to book by a logic and mastering of the facts superior to his own. To village folk he is benevolent and autocratic when he is well disposed. Men like the Carlyles are anathema to him. And indeed the class has always flourished better in ordered England than in haughty, democratic Scotland.

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Had the quarrel which soon broke out between the Carlyles and General Sharpe been waged with old James Carlyle alone, the General had had enough on his hands. With the son Thomas implicated as well he had no chance. The dispute indeed brought the father into the matter on his own account, and the end was a complete rupture of relations not only as affecting Hoddam but Mainhill in addition. The Carlyles threw up the lease of Hoddam, which had not yet been entered into for more than a yearly tenancy, while they gave the necessary year's notice for the termination of the other. Who was in fault cannot now be determined, for on the landlord's side is silence, but the result was doubtless satisfactory to both. It may not be amiss to point out here the amusing gusto and alacrity with which Carlyle identifies himself alternately with landlord and with tenant, according to his sympathies and clan interests. When himself is the farmer, his concern is to stimulate "lazy and sluttish hinds"; when he acts as proprietor, he dreads the well-known incompetence of tenants!

The end of the Hoddam Hill disagreement was the withdrawal of the Carlyles from the farm at Whitsunday 1826, the Scots removal term in the end of May. But Carlyle himself had departed long before this, leaving Alexander in charge, who had all along been the real farmer and was the one agriculturally interested. Old James Carlyle gave notice also, and he and his wife and family eventually removed themselves from Mainhill to Scotsbrig, a small farm in the neighbourhood of Ecclefechan but the property of another landlord.

At Scotsbrig the elder Carlyles remained for the

rest of their lives, and both James Carlyle and his wife Margaret died there in succession. The youngest of their sons, James junior, succeeded to the farm, Alexander eventually emigrating to Canada, and James in turn died there also, the last of the Ecclefechan Carlyles. The farming career of Thomas had been as brief as it was potent and fateful. During its short continuance Carlyle's life was changed inwardly, vitally, and spiritually as at no other period before or after.

## CHAPTER XV

MARRIAGE (17TH OCTOBER 1826)  
THOMAS CARLYLE *ÆT.* 31; JANE WELSH *ÆT.* 25

"Had we never loved sae kindly,  
Had we never loved sae blindly,  
Never met or never parted,  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

BURNS.

"IN brief, after much survey and consideration of the real interests and real feelings of both parties, I proposed, and it was gently acceded to, that German Romance once done (end of September or so) we should wed, settle at Edinburgh in some small suburban house (details and preparations there all left to her kind mother and her) and thenceforth front our chances in the world, not as two lots, but as one, for better for worse, till death us part!"

From all we know of Carlyle, we marvel when we hear the story told as though he was impatient or eager to marry, and when we come to consider the matter carefully, we find that it could not have been that Carlyle was really impatient to marry.

Froude, following the plain statements of Mrs. Carlyle and reading all the letters, unfortunately forces such a conclusion. So engaged is Froude maintaining the "social inequality" thesis of Mrs.

Carlyle that he forgets Carlyle had already by letter stated plainly that being "in love" in his case meant no overturn of prudential reasoning, and that he was willing to put the very thought of marriage with Miss Welsh to one side if she for her part really considered that wise. It stands to reason no argument for hasty marriage, or even early marriage, could readily be urged on the Carlyle side. By this time all concerned, and certainly Carlyle himself, knew that Miss Welsh was no heiress, that in the meantime she possessed no income to aid her husband, and that the full extent of her estate was practically—  
Craigenputtock.

Carlyle had full faith in himself and he knew he could live on very little; but he was no fool, and knew he must earn a fair sum of money annually if he intended to wed Miss Welsh of Haddington. It is plain, or becomes plain when one begins to understand, that desire for early marriage, this accelerated approach of marriage, and the very marriage itself, was the result—ungallant though it be to say so—of Miss Welsh's own plainly revealed desires. Carlyle knew what he had earned, and doubtless told her. There was not the least vestige of deceit; and we know Carlyle was never an optimist. Miss Welsh must have overruled him. Matters went further. Miss Welsh wrote, as we have seen, telling him what her mother feared from his temper, and Carlyle answered very proudly and straightly. But he carefully added that perhaps there was after all something in his nature which unfitted him. She overruled this also.

It is manifestly wrong, though no blame attached

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to the innocent wrong-doer, that Froude should make his Greek Chorus wail over Carlyle's "selfishness" and want of regard for one in Miss Welsh's status in society. It is against all the facts. That Froude is innocent is a fact proved from Froude's own narrative, and therefore Froude can have had no design to deceive. The biographer began his great task unfortunately with his mind made up on this matter long years before; and from Mrs. Carlyle herself he had imbibed the central, wrong notion of the "social *mésalliance*," while his own knowledge of the realities (and not mere appearances) of Scots country town society was hopelessly at fault.

From Froude's narrative one can find no motive whatever for Carlyle hastening the marriage, his prospects being what they were. He had a lover's eagerness to possess the object of his love, but that admittedly under complete prudential restraint. His actual words are the words of a lover acting so.

Why, then, the Greek Chorus? For Carlyle was not pressing Miss Welsh to marry. No one could have done that but Carlyle. Her own mother could not influence her, and never expected, poor lady, to do so.

This marriage, in fact, was of Miss Welsh's bringing about, not Carlyle's at all, and Froude, believing in the justice of Carlyle's remorse as well as his sorrow, persistently blames him for the marriage. The facts do not support Froude; they are far otherwise.

Miss Welsh's position, far from being that of an "heiress" of independent income as she and Froude would have us believe, was as we have stated. Even



after her marriage to Carlyle, her mother was left with insufficient means to maintain her old establishment. Mrs. Welsh returned home to her father and sister. Even when Mrs. Carlyle did ultimately succeed to her "heirship" the difference to her husband's income was not great and could have effected little. His status was then far above that of the Welshes. Miss Welsh had been reminded of what apparently she was far from unmindful, of her mother's rightful and legal claim as her father's widow to a small part — one-third — of the revenue from her father's landed property. Impulsively and generously, as we have seen, she had made over to that mother the *entire* income, and not the third only. She was now without any income, and she felt the false position of being really co-sharer in her mother's income but legally (and apparently to everyone) dependent on her.

Whether she felt it or not the case fitted her. We are told, again and again, that she would never "get on" with her mother. It requires little ingenuity and no very base estimate of human nature to imagine that one very probable reason may have been that she regretted her impulsive action, but that her mother, acting no doubt from a strong desire to prevent the marriage, refused to forego her rights or annul the deed.

The prospect in front of Miss Welsh, reduced to its wordly elements, of which confessedly Miss Welsh possessed her share of appreciation, was this : to marry Carlyle, since Mrs. Montagu's letter made an early marriage peremptory for so high-spirited a young lady, or to remain a dependent on her mother, in the most important matters guided by her, on a very

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insufficient income. It is a very different state of affairs from Froude's "Mrs. Welsh had resolved to leave Haddington. All her friends, the social circle . . . regarded the marriage with Carlyle as an extraordinary *mésalliance*. To them he was known only as an eccentric farmer's son, without profession or prospects, and their pity or their sympathy would be alike distressing." Had the "eccentric farmer's son" concealed anything from Miss Welsh, something might be said for so loose and careless a fashion of emphasising a certain aspect of the case. But even then the case is too obviously as narrated by Mrs. Carlyle herself, who honestly believed it. Had Miss Welsh not married Carlyle she must have remained in equal poverty, in a stagnant country town or suburban Edinburgh, admitted to far inferior society than that which gathered round Carlyle even in the Comely Bank period, and she would never have realised, even by the best of all imaginable consolatory marriages, the magnificent dreams of a literary "salon," which eventually in sort she did.

The immediate consequence of *not* marrying Carlyle, besides degrading her in her own eyes by forcing her to realise she was not acting according to her own high standards, must have been both uninviting and far from agreeable. In marrying Thomas Carlyle, any wise or merely intelligent, common-sense individual must have said Miss Welsh was taking the wisest and most promising course. Her true friends must have advised the marriage had they known the true fact that she had no income, and that her estate was Craigenputtock. There need be

little doubt that every one of them, and all Carlyle's "dearest" friends, and perhaps even Carlyle's own brothers and kindred, believed Carlyle was marrying an "heiress." The mean-spirited and cynical would say he was marrying "for money." A man in Carlyle's position always marries "for money" if he marries a woman with money according to the philosophy of the worldling. But the weight of this calumny would naturally bear heaviest on poor Carlyle. Miss Welsh was condoled with; which she hated because she *believed* she needed condolence. "Poor lassie!" "Faitherless, misguided bairn!" One can hear the remarks if one knows the class. And poor innocent Mrs. Welsh would be blamed profusely for "allowing such a thing."

Yet it all springs from suppression of the really important truth. Had the world known the facts about the Welsh estate, that Miss Welsh during her mother's lifetime possessed no means of her own whatever, and that Carlyle and she were to live on Carlyle's earnings and these alone, the world would have judged differently to what Miss Welsh did or thought. It would have reckoned Carlyle very noble and far from "selfish" or "peasant." He was never for one moment dreaming of his wife baking her own bread and scrubbing floors. He had told her what he had earned, and also very, very plainly all he ever hoped to earn. He was as nobly taking another man's daughter to wife as ever man did. His toil and his genius were to support the twain,—a precarious outlook at that moment, no doubt, but no one so keenly alive to the fact as the man who was marrying Jane Welsh. No prospects dazzled

him of help from his wife or from his wife's relations. These could do and did *nothing*. Had it known the truth the world would have applauded Carlyle and astonished Miss Welsh! So astonished her that she must then have been unable even unconsciously to mislead Froude. Had Froude been a lawyer or a Scotsman he had possibly not been so easily misled. The world had not then misjudged Carlyle, though Carlyle, noble always, must have continued to misjudge himself. In such a case no true man *can* advance his own case; he requires that to be done for him. Probably the world now understands that pregnant motto on Carlyle's grave, "*Humilitate*."

Froude's eloquent and historically true enough but fundamentally erroneous narrative must then be re-read more wisely, if full justice is to be done to Thomas Carlyle.

No marriage was ever discussed more thoroughly or in such a way as almost to force upon the spectator, had there been one, a notion that it was well-recognised by everybody as ominous and full of perils to both parties. Admitting the fact that a man is in love, one cannot well see how he can refuse early marriage if the other party hints or desires that an early marriage should take place! We know that Miss Welsh had now more than hinted that she was ready. She had come near to losing Carlyle, "and he had never seemed so dear." If the world (in the persons of good, gushing Mrs. Montagu and Irving & Co.) was beginning to remark on her maiden state as a proof of devotion to Irving, she may also have thought it was high time she did marry. Who can doubt she felt so? as any

high-minded woman must. It is bad enough perhaps in the worldly scheme of things to remain unmarried, but surely it is intolerable that a good woman have the reputation of doing so for the sake of a plump, comfortably married Scots preacher who can bemoan her constancy to a female audience! Poor Miss Welsh! Poor Carlyle! Shall we not add also, and from the heart, poor, honest, misled Froude! who meant so well and was so courageous, yet was under disadvantages so vital and grave.

Perhaps, too, it should not be forgotten that by this most regrettable breach of honourable and obligatory silence Edward Irving, the truest friend Carlyle or any man ever possessed, was the unconscious instrument of Carlyle's married miseries, and became doubly the one personage without whose agency this marriage of the Carlyles could never have been. Few marriages have been more essentially romantic and dramatic than this of Thomas Carlyle and Jane Welsh.

Hitherto, however, no biographer of Carlyle but has adopted Jane Welsh's own view of her marriage! All of them—Froude, Garnett, Nichol—have in greater or less degree viewed the marriage as one where Carlyle had all to gain and nothing to lose, that he married advantageously, and Jane Welsh disadvantageously. They have failed to detect the blunder and its significance.

Yet the facts are not as they have been represented. Carlyle was not keen to marry, and the important facts that he had deliberately proposed to set up house at Craigenputtock (a proposal she had ridiculed merely), and when that was refused

him had as deliberately established himself at Hoddam Hill to live his own life in his own way, whether as married man or as bachelor, have not been considered or weighed as they ought to have been as proof of Carlyle's intention to remain single. It was by the merest chance the visit of Miss Welsh found Carlyle bound down to but one year's agreement to farm Hoddam Hill. A longer lease was clearly intended so soon as the formalities and a settlement had been effected with the outgoing tenant and the landlord, between whom there was great confusion and conflict of interest. Doubtless Carlyle would have thrown up the lease whether or not Miss Welsh had desired early marriage, for he was displeased with the business, but there need be as little doubt that, luckily, Miss Welsh found him brought already face to face with an awkward miscarriage of his lofty plans. When he took Hoddam Hill farm Carlyle was clearly intending a bachelor existence for some years longer. Miss Welsh could deduce no other intention from his actions. She it was whose visit now, whose personal and compromising difficulties now pressing, had brought upon Carlyle a new problem, and one which, however he might welcome it as a lover, he was far too shrewd and honest a man to view without considerable misgivings. Marriage in his case, however, he must have reasoned, could only be a spur and incentive to his energies. With the woman he loved to work for, to support and maintain, Carlyle felt he could struggle even better than before; and he did.

The marriage, prudentially considered, was a

mistake, perhaps. If so, both parties were keenly alive to it. It is unfair to Carlyle to pretend that he was urgent and she was simply lured by ambition. Carlyle would have turned at her lightest positive desire and left her alone. He was not a worldly man, and it is certain that he could no more view his and her relative positions correctly than he could have married either for money or rank. Miss Welsh's outlook, had he only realised it, was a great deal worse than his own. Without Carlyle she had very little opportunity left either to gratify ambition or make a "splendid" marriage.

Why did she visit Ecclefechan? Because, in her own words, Carlyle never had seemed dearer than when she had thought to have lost him. She had been frightened and, loverlike, she hesitated no longer. She could not act in any unmaidenly fashion. Jane Welsh was always a lady in the fullest sense of the word. But, like every other lover in the same position, Carlyle could read her face and her unspoken desires. Manfully and loverlike he hastened to offer himself and fortunes in her distress, and she accepted him gladly. Her interests were considered but his were not! Had she considered Carlyle's interests she had left him in peace, for admittedly she was not in love with him and had told him so. When did lover remember those words, however, when the maiden's bodily presence and her actions so clearly belied them? Froude's sage remarks, uttered more than half a century after the event, are unjust to Carlyle, for the simple reason that the man would have been a coward and a recreant lover, despised alike by Miss Welsh and

his own conscience, had he chosen to act the wise part which Froude indicates and draw back from the loosely formed engagement. Carlyle had no need to cajole this "wild fawn" before capture. She had of her own purpose, to his delight yet to his embarrassment, come to his feet. Had Carlyle done anything else than he did after her fateful visit, had he even counselled prudence or suggested "inequality of birth" or other serious objection, how must Carlyle have appeared? Surely as a poltroon desiring to escape from a legal and valid promise of marriage, not because of the really sensible objections themselves, but secretly and in truth, so it would be reported, because he had now learned Miss Welsh had alienated her income and would be dependent on his exertions, or because of some miserable jealousy of Irving, the very thought of which was an insult to Miss Welsh. Carlyle has had hard fortune; for his very bravery has been persistently denounced as selfish indulgence! Verily, the gods must laugh when they think of men and their judgments on one another!

It is the way of the world. Had Carlyle done the wise thing Froude suggests he might still have been a great man and possibly a happier, but Mrs. Carlyle would have had no share in that greatness. Nor would Carlyle have escaped the contempt of posterity for his prudential escape from a "youthful indiscretion." The marriage, and the poverty with which its earliest beginnings were surrounded, increased the bitterness of both. The world seemed so very hard to two innocent people, trying without noise to earn a respectable livelihood, that these two



became in turn very hard and harsh to the world. They bore the marks of their agony to the end. The misery of it darkens their memories still.

Carlyle's escape from the Hoddam Hill lease was fortunately only too likely to be easy in any event. Since early marriage was the order of the day, an early marriage there must be. Carlyle was honourably willing. Miss Welsh, as we have seen, discussed her mother's objections with him, clearly resolved that Mrs. Welsh should not be an inmate of their home or afford opportunities for scoffing to their relations and friends.

Carlyle had not the foolish notions Froude so freely attributes. Like most sensible men he held that a true lady can undergo a good deal and suffer a great deal if "needs must and the devil drives." Necessity reveals great natures. But Carlyle knew quite as well as Froude himself what sort of existence he and his wife required and had reasonable hopes of living. We have never found him meagre or penurious in his notions about life, and his own had been spent till recently amid luxurious surroundings. He aimed high always, socially, professionally, mentally, and morally. He travelled always, and usually had his riding horse. He never starved in a garret. He knew as well as Jane Welsh the sort of home and existence necessary, and he was under no delusions whatever about the difficulties in the way of realising his hopes.

Hoddam cottage proved that he had designed a tolerably comfortable and sensible bachelor existence. It did not require Miss Welsh to prove to him that Hoddam was "impossible" for *her*. He had not

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been thinking of her when he took it. Now that he was to marry he himself willingly agreed with her desires to try a town literary life. London he would not try, because he had no hopes there whatever. Edinburgh was the only alternative, and he was eager enough and hopeful enough to try Edinburgh. He did better. He simply handed over the entire affair to Miss Welsh and her mother to select a house, to furnish it and make all arrangements for the married pair settling there. He could not have pleased them better : and he acted both wisely and sensibly.

Mrs. Welsh, apparently, was keenly desirous to help all she could now that the marriage was inevitable. She may have wished to restore the income to the daughter, but Carlyle very nobly supported Miss Welsh in refusing the offer. If ever for a moment he relied on Miss Welsh's income as help for their matrimonial venture he knew now that such was not even desirable, and he was brave to face the situation without it. At the worst, the income or the prospect of it could always serve as assurance for his wife in case of his own death, obviously a great assistance to people about to marry.

The two ladies made an excellent choice, and Carlyle's first married home in Comely Bank, in a northern suburb of Edinburgh, is a tasteful and pretty, if modest, little dwelling even now. Eighty years ago it was much prettier, more rural and far more attractive, so far out of the city as to be in the country yet conveniently near. It commanded a wide expanse of country sloping down to the Firth of Forth, with sea and ships glistening on a sunny day, a healthy romantic site and a flattering tribute

to his wife's good taste and thoughtfulness. The house at Comely Bank was probably to the full as large and tasteful as any she and her mother would have selected for their two selves, or could have inhabited, since they were possessed only of so modest a joint income. Surely there is no declension of status here.

Edinburgh was fixed on, partly in deference to Miss Welsh and partly as a highly commendable compromise between her desire for London and Carlyle's rooted aversion to venture thither. It was a good choice. The University offered Professorships occasionally, and Carlyle would be at hand in the event of a Professorship (for which he was or might be regarded as eligible) becoming vacant. Edinburgh still possessed its publishers and its own magazines. National centralisation in London had not then proceeded so far as it has done since. *Wilhelm Meister* had been published there, and other work could be looked for there with confidence. Edinburgh in 1826 was in real truth a literary centre.

It was a famous year, but a dark, dreary one for Edinburgh publishers. The times were inauspicious for the appearance of any young literary man desiring money or work from them, and much more for one hoping to support a wife thereby. Ballantyne's, the great publishing firm reared on the genius of Walter Scott, had gone crash into bankruptcy, bringing down Constable's, the rival publishing house with which (through Scott) it was nevertheless inextricably involved, and ruining at last even the great man himself. Sir Walter had suffered so keenly, wrote Carlyle to one of his friends, that he had taken to

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his bed and was seriously ill. Carlyle is not very sympathetic. There is this to be said, however, Carlyle never found the world sympathetic with himself, till he also had little need of its sympathy.

Hoddam Hill was vacated on 26th May 1826. This summer Carlyle records as the driest he ever remembered. "No rain from the end of March to the middle of August." Between May and his own removal to Edinburgh in October immediately after his marriage, Carlyle resolved to stay with his people at Mainhill. "German Romance" was still to finish, and he was too wise to be ignorant that he was working under present conditions as he had never worked before. At Mainhill he pursued his task of translation of "ten pages daily." His presence brought no little inconvenience to his family.

The house had to be enlarged by the joiners, but the old mother and father were ready and willing to do anything for this gifted son. In consequence, Carlyle always possessed pleasant memories of his father's "home." He was as happy nowhere else; for nowhere else, not even from his wife (whose future lay in his hands) did he ever obtain such ungrudging help and assistance.

The Carlyles were a "close" folk, as all families in their situation must be. Planning skilfully, but very loftily, they were wisely reticent always concerning their plans. No word of the proposed marriage, says Carlyle, had leaked out, though doubtless, unknown to himself, many a skilful village gossip had "divined" what was toward, and putting "two and two together" knew more than he suspected. In

Haddington, however, where the Welshes were no less disposed to reticence, if from other causes, it had not been possible to preserve the "secret" longer than August. Mrs. Welsh had long found Haddington unattractive and wisely she resolved to leave it, since it was likely to prove intolerable to one of her disposition, now that she must be left alone. The gossip which Froude records is the standard country town gossip for such cases. Every family like the Welshes has its dependants and flatterers, with all to gain and nothing to lose from the "sympathetic tear." Mrs. Welsh proposed to retire to Templand forthwith, and the marriage ceremony itself, so it was arranged, would be performed there. A quiet marriage would not have been practicable or "neighbourly" in Haddington.

Miss Welsh, in truth, does not appear at her best. She had brought this early marriage on the unconscious Carlyle, and yet she was so convinced it would end badly that she likes to make him understand she realises she is a fool. In one letter she enumerates all the other "possibles," the eligible wooers she thinks might have her. One wonders what the real notions of these were! But Carlyle inflicts an amazing, damaging blow on the Froude diatribes by immediately "taking her up" and solemnly offering to set her free at once. "We are *not* married," he says; "there is no need for us to marry unless we like." Carlyle wrote her a frank, noble letter, revealing at once and for ever to us how very noble and loyal and true Carlyle's nature was, and also what a mocking, uncertain spirit he was about to marry. He guessed the future all too well, and in spite of all

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that Froude says, Carlyle was the only one of the two who did. He was under no delusion. Even now she was, and he told her so. "This comes of the circumstance that my apprenticeship is ending and yours is still going on."

Carlyle more than half suspected in that letter the bitter truth which first broke on his astonished understanding when his wife lay dead, and at last he read her letters. His wife was a lover of respectability and fame and wealth, as the world is and no differently. She was not marrying Carlyle because he was a genius and she loved him, as he, poor man, was marrying her. She was marrying Carlyle because he appeared a genius truly enough, but also because from her "compromised" condition with the "unspeakable" Irving she saw no other escape probable, and had herself, as she knew, brought this marriage to pass. Carlyle comes better than Miss Welsh does out of the ordeal which public examination of the facts of their pre-nuptial correspondence inevitably entails, for all her appealing and pathetic "last marrying words."

She answers Carlyle, says Froude, very beautifully. Perhaps; but she can be very bitter in her beauty, and her words could bring no happiness or comfort to the stern man with the wonderful humour whom she was pledged to marry. Would Froude, we wonder, have liked himself to receive that "very beautiful" answer had *he* been on the point of marrying the lady who wrote it?

Were I seeking happiness, she says, I would not be going to marry you! But you have taught me that there is something nobler than happiness,

that men have nothing to do with seeking happiness, but possess a very stern duty they must perform.

"I love you, Mr. Carlyle, tenderly, devotedly. But I may not put my mother away from me, even for your sake. I cannot do it."

One is amazed. Why, then, had she written so concerning her mother's serious objections to Carlyle? "My conscience rejects this act with indignation." The act was a lover's rhapsody of Carlyle's, which was not seriously meant about him and her living at Scotsbrig, but Mrs. Welsh not allowed to visit her. Or rather that was her own deduction from a chance remark of Carlyle's that Mrs. Welsh would never feel at ease among his people. He desired to be honest. She had already written to him urging him to overcome the difficulties raised by the "inequalities of our birth"! Carlyle never forgot. He was impressing on her the need for candour. His people had been presumed to be beneath hers in social rank. If they were, then the two mothers were not likely to be agreeable to each other.

Miss Welsh proposed in turn, what she herself can have felt no desire for, that Mrs. Welsh should live with them in Edinburgh. Carlyle answered kindly but inflexibly. The man, not the woman, must rule the house. The woman must leave her own people for the sake of the man. Very wisely, too, he remarked that Mrs. Welsh was not likely to be satisfied with any such provision. Indeed Miss Welsh did not mean the proposal. Again and again later events proved that while Carlyle and Mrs. Welsh were very good friends, with equal knowledge of each other's qualities, Miss Welsh always disagreed sooner or

later with the mother, and always blamed the mother as responsible for the fact.

These were the earlier letters of this anxious courtship period. Afterwards they fixed on their future abode, as we have said, amicably and even without delay. Carlyle, in fact, was *not* the unreasonable person she always professed to find him, before and after marriage alike, any more than her mother was.

The two ladies left Haddington for Templand, there to establish themselves till the marriage day in October. Templand is at no very great distance from Ecclefechan in the same Border country. Between the two places there was constant correspondence, which concluded with the pathetic but hardly confidently trustful "last speech and marrying words of Jane Baillie Welsh." The lady had the better "business" head of the two, and she is seen watchful of the least detail. Ungraciously but resignedly Carlyle saw to the arrangements for the ceremony itself, interviewed the parish minister, obtained his bachelor's certificate, and ordered the necessary proclamation of banns in both parishes. He described it all half gladly, half dolefully in a letter to her at Templand.

Neither had the best of reputations in his or her private family circle for possessing "good temper." Since allusion has already been made deliberately to Carlyle's temper by his future wife and her mother, it is only fair to note that Miss Welsh herself admits in her letters that both aunt and grandfather observed at this time "a great improvement" in this important respect! "She is really a douce, peaceable body, this Pen!" said the grandfather, and the phrase points



to previous conclusions to the contrary. The good old man set to work to read *Wilhelm Meister* since Carlyle had translated it and the translator was "coming into the family." He is not likely to have advanced very far, but at least he knew his duty and was anxious to please.

To each other, Froude says, the two lovers wrote as if "they were going to be executed"; but perhaps Froude had too little humour himself and read everything a great deal more severely and solemnly than either of the parties did. Bravado and mock scorn are rarely entirely absent from lovers' correspondence. "Bless me!" says Carlyle at last, "we take this marrying too much to heart," a saying which Mrs. Carlyle apparently considered proof of the difference between love as a man regards it and the love of a woman. "'Tis woman's whole existence." Hardly! but since it is a *domestic* bargain, the party most interested is the woman. Not hers alone the penalty.

Carlyle calls the "marrying words" a "most delightful and swanlike melody," and adds his own most courtier-like lover flattery by way of his answer to them: "Such a maiden bidding farewell to the unmarried earth of which she was the fairest ornament." He felt very tenderly and he answered very devoutly and religiously, possessed like the lady herself by the most anxious sense of his responsibility.

The correspondence ended happily with the wedding-day. It is a style of "love-letters" the world has little knowledge of, letters as peculiar and characteristic as were ever penned by man and woman. The letters do not impress their readers with a feeling of happiness, still less joy or trust or

good hope. One party never seems to forget she is doing what is most probably a very foolish thing, while the other is but too anxious to impress the foolishness of her action upon her. The world can rarely have witnessed such a pair of lovers, but then a pair of lovers in precisely such circumstances is no more usual. "Dear little child! How is it that I have deserved thee? I swear I will love thee with my whole heart, and think my life well spent if it can make thine happy." Brave words! but Carlyle wrote them and meant them. It was not possible for Jane Welsh to be happy or Thomas Carlyle to be happy doing or not doing anything. Had not "happiness," alas! been already ruled out of their matrimonial vocabulary?

"Your own day, as was fitting," as Carlyle calls Tuesday the 17th of October 1826, was their marriage day, and Thomas Carlyle and Jane Baillie Welsh were married in the drawing-room of her grandfather's house at Templand by the parish minister in presence of the bride's nearer relatives as witnesses. John Carlyle was the best man and indeed the only other Carlyle present. If the marriage was a *mésalliance*, the family of poorer rank concerned was a proud one and willingly remained absent. In Scotland it was not the custom of their day to use the church building itself for marriage celebrations. Marriage in kirk was too nearly a "sacrament" to be tolerated by "true blue" Presbyterianism or the Kirk of Knox. Shamefacedly Scottish custom is now drawing more and more nearly to more ancient observance, and perhaps a "Carlyle-Welsh" marriage would now be performed *within* the church. The

kirk in Scotland has only lately become even a sacred building, and was seldom in Scotland in post-Reformation times the "house of God."

It had been arranged that John should have the travelling coach in readiness. Froude makes much of Carlyle's request ("stipulation" he calls it) that John might, if he chose, ride in the coach so far as Moffat with them, where he could then catch a mail diligence and return to Ecclefechan. Mere thoughtfulness for his brother suggested this to Carlyle. Coming to do him a service John might experience a difficulty in returning. John, however, was a great deal wiser than Thomas in these matters, and had made his own arrangements. The request to be allowed to smoke "six cigars" was a mere humorous courtesy, a half-apologetic reminder of his weakness in resisting the desire for a smoke.

The honeymoon began with an instantaneous flight to their own house in Comely Bank, Edinburgh. They were married probably quite early in the morning to admit of the long day journey by coach thither. Wedding feast there was none, since no attempt was ever made by either party to "put a face" on things. Appearances deceived, and the Carlyles avoided whatever might deceive! In Scots law marriage is a contract. Carlyle believed the ceremony could represent nothing else and it did represent nothing else. Yet his marriage was a true marriage from the highest as from the lowest point of view, as lofty, as spiritual and eternal as ever human marriage was in whatever form or by whatever ceremony celebrated.

## CHAPTER XVI

EARLY MARRIED YEARS—COMELY BANK,  
EDINBURGH—OCTOBER 1826 TO MARCH 1828

FROM a passage in the "Reminiscences of Jane Welsh Carlyle" it would appear that for some years after her marriage Mrs. Carlyle persisted in signing herself by her maiden name. The passage in question may be found on page 128 of Froude's edition and is as follows: "From her my Jeannie was called 'Jane Baillie Welsh' at the time of our marriage, but after a good few years, when she took to signing 'Jane Welsh Carlyle,' in which I never hindered her, she dropped the 'Baillie' I suppose as too long."

Very evidently from the first there was friction and disagreement which required length of time to disappear. There need be little doubt that this important little matter of the wife's signature was easily the most objectionable feature from Carlyle's point of view, and on every ground is indefensible. Froude apparently drew his own conclusions, but however honestly and firmly believed by himself, these can scarcely be accepted. It would be grossly unfair to Carlyle to admit them. One is bound to say this strange action of Mrs. Carlyle is better explained by the overweening "social *mésalliance*" theory, which she stoutly believed. Had Froude's

deduction been the correct one, there would surely have been at least some more or less public knowledge of it at the time, and apparently there was no such thing.

The point is of importance if only as proof that from the first Mrs. Carlyle possessed little consideration for any one's feelings and literally none for those of the man she had married. Whatever excuses were available for her act, she had none for thus inviting the attention of her correspondents to the fact that she had passed with marriage under no husband domination and had forfeited no whit of status. She at least was no Carlyle, marriage or no.

Carlyle for his part, on the other hand, seems to have written home hopeful and very grateful letters to his mother—not bright letters, perhaps, for marriage had not cured biliousness, but very full of love and praise of his young wife. Like lesser men, he wonders how he came to deserve such a treasure. "I may say in my heart that she is far better than any other wife and loves me with a devotion which it is a mystery to me how I have ever deserved. She is gay and happy as a lark, and looks with such soft cheerfulness into my gloomy countenance that new hope passes over into me every time I meet her eye."

To his brother, however, he confesses that he is in very bad health and almost distracted. "I am all in a maze," he told John, "scarce knowing the right hand from the left in the path I have to walk." This of course refers to a mental state and not to a physical one, and we must not forget he is ever prone to exaggeration, but "Alas! Jack, I am

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bilious," tells its own pitiful tale of worry, sleeplessness, and anxiety. Any one who at marriage has undertaken responsibilities like his can understand very well how difficult his new situation must have been for him. It was impossible Carlyle could ever be happy. He was pessimistically inclined, and too ready always to dwell upon the uncertain rather than the constant elements in the problem before him. It was hard luck that renewed ill-health should break out so soon, and the cause may have been the too sudden change of diet from the coarser peasant food to which alone he was accustomed, and without which, to the end, he found it impossible almost to exist.

But if Jane Welsh had been reluctant to engage in the matrimonial venture, she was ready and eager to do her part in the struggle. Home was made attractive for Carlyle. Circumstances soon revealed to the newly made wife—not to her liking, either—what life with a literary man was to mean. Her husband required solitude, as do all highly strung individuals who have never passed under the stern discipline of necessity. In his mother's house solitude was not an easy thing to obtain, but every one had been eager to assist him to attain it. His wife recognised a certain necessity, but had not bargained for Carlyle withdrawing himself from her society for the entire day or well into the evening. She too for the first time was passing under discipline—she who had been encouraged in every childish whim. Both husband and wife had been in abnormal situations all their lives, subject to no wholesome, imperative control, acknowledging none as master or employer or even as guardian.

The hardship of their case consisted in nothing but this: each was now possessed of a formed and fixed character, and that had now to adapt itself to a new set of conditions requiring compromise and "give and take." What wonder the experience was neither pleasant nor merry! Is the common lot so different?

As householders and the heads of a family both began well. They "took seats in a neighbouring church," at "Jane's" instance, one may surmise, desiring beyond all to be "gigman" or respectable. Carlyle has so often held up this word to scorn it has become peculiarly his own. "Why do you say the man was respectable?" Counsel asked at Thurtell's famous trial. "He kept a gig," answered the witness; and Carlyle saw the irony and humour of the answer, as well as the pitiful human creed it implied. He always used the term "gigman" for the smooth, canting humbug who was reckoned "respectable" because he kept a carriage, from his possessions rather than from his character. "Gigman" was the world's type of respectability.

"Jane" also arranged, apparently, that every Sunday Carlyle should "take the Book," that is, conduct family worship in old Scots patriarchal style, where the entire household, including the servants, forms the audience, and the husband as household chief acts as priest, the oldest human service of worship.

The Welshes were already known to certain Edinburgh people, and these were a nucleus for the young Mrs. Carlyle to draw upon in forming her own circle. If Carlyle and she were alike proud and scornful, she alone was wise and watchful in her

pride. Carlyle himself had made valuable friends, or acquaintances who might become friends and were likely to be useful. Irving and he were already well known among the literary set of the younger generation. Sir William Hamilton was one of those he knew, a brilliant philosopher and widely read antiquarian. John Wilson, the famous Christopher North, he knew much better; Lockhart also and several clever literary young advocates. In the ranks of the Church he knew fewer; but the most distinguished Churchman, Dr. Chalmers, was now a Professor in St. Andrews and almost an old friend who admired and liked Carlyle. The Carlyles opened house auspiciously, and while Carlyle worked hard and strove hard to sell and publish the work of his brain (those marvellous essays and reviews known as the *Miscellanies* beginning from this time), Mrs. Carlyle established a weekly "At Home" and encouraged literary gatherings at their house. Many went, and every one was kind and took an interest in this argumentative but amazingly well-read young author who was a "German mystic" and adored Goethe; and in his witty, clever young wife.

In Edinburgh Carlyle, as we have said, had two very excellent libraries at his command: the Advocates' Library and the University Library, hardly so complete as the other or as it afterwards became. In both he read voraciously, distracted still, however, as to what form his literary effort would assume. Perhaps he clung still to the idea of a novel, though already Carlyle had discovered that with all the kindred genius to illumine the past, he could not (like Scott)



exclude himself and paint it. He still tried verse, though there also he must have known he did not possess the master key nor could he unlock the secrets. He leaned naturally to history, inclining already vaguely to the Knox period or the Cromwellian Commonwealth and the French Revolution. Meanwhile he wrought diligently in the German mine he had so providentially discovered for himself.

His journal (while he kept one) provides a clue to his thought. Long ago Irving and he had revelled while in Kirkcaldy among the master spirits of English prose, had sworn by Fuller and Browne and Milton, and had admired the "grand manner." Now Carlyle was more critical. Scott he was more than ready to disparage. "What are his novels worth?" he asks. "A bout of champagne." Scott is the "chief restaurateur of Europe," where *he* might have been among the "conscript fathers." Surely as perverse and wrong-headed a verdict as even Carlyle ever gave. Must a man preach a creed, or preach at all, before he can benefit his fellows? Is Scott's "restaurant" food any worse than *Past and Present*? But Carlyle, as the man "with a mission," bears hardly on all fellow-creatures who professed none.

Poor Scott, too, had been overwhelmingly struck down at this very moment. It is a pity Carlyle did not know suffering and sorrow more as a consequence of personal wrong-doing till it was too late and his life had been lived. No more than Walter Scott, if nearly so much, is Carlyle found to be exempt from the need of purification by fire.

"Had he lived he would have been a Poet!"

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spoken of Byron, reads perilously near downright nonsense till the reader remembers that Carlyle means by poet inspired thinker and leader. None can dispute the melody and passion of Byron's verse.

Carlyle now resumed his inquiries into history and its meanings. He was making his own discoveries and preparing to write history as Carlyle alone could write it, as the Jew wrote it, to prove the existence and continual presence of God in our midst.

From of old Brewster had been the most practical helper and well-wisher. Carlyle had been Brewster's first-aid in all translation work. Now that Carlyle had formally entered the pursuit of literature, Brewster exerted himself to be friendly. He called, and was made welcome at Comely Bank. Carlyle sought out De Quincey also, who blushfully remembered his unlucky review of *Meister* but was ready and willing to make amends. He was, of course, ignorant of his own character as portrayed in the "love-letters" of the young couple with whom he was admitted to terms of friendship! "Barry Cornwall" Carlyle had met in London at the house of the Montagus. He had married Mrs. Montagu's daughter, and he now sent Carlyle a letter of introduction to Jeffrey. That Jeffrey had not yet acknowledged Mrs. Carlyle's alleged relationship is apparent from the circumstance that Carlyle first formed his friendship with Jeffrey not in consequence of this problematic tie of kinship, nor even as acquaintance of the Welshes, as Froude makes out, but in this fashion: indirectly a far-away result of the kindness of the sorely maligned Mrs. Montagu, whom Mrs. Carlyle so disliked! But Mrs.

Montagu pursued them with favours in spite of or because of her attempt to prevent their union, and it ought to have been credited to her for righteousness. That was not, unfortunately, the way of the Carlyles.

Carlyle formed many plans. He had hoped to find the editorship of an Edinburgh magazine shortly before, and had been seriously advised thereto by his friend, the Rev. Mr. Murray. He now proposed a Literary Annual Register with wide, able outlook on all British and continental literature of the year; but publishers who had emerged from so profound a crisis showed no alacrity to lose money in Carlyle's cause, which did not appeal in the least to themselves.

But Carlyle found an eager listener and an influential friend in Jeffrey. In his reminiscences of this famous Lord Advocate, Carlyle has narrated how they met on the occasion of their first conscious meeting. Carlyle never during all the years revealed to Jeffrey the latter's treatment of the "Gravitation Skit," being wisely desirous of letting sleeping dogs lie. His narrative bears the impress of hauteur and "off-handedness," of indifference and independence, which, however habitual in later life, could not have been prominent or even tolerable in the actual circumstances.

He explained to Jeffrey his own notions as to a contribution, and readily received permission to send one on German literature. Jeffrey's interest had been aroused, and Carlyle attracted him profoundly. At first Jeffrey looked for a notable recruit for the Whigs, but in that he was to be disappointed in full perfection. Jeffrey received a pressing invitation to visit Mrs. Carlyle, and he visited the pair and ac-

knowledgeed readily the "relationship," and—triumph for Mrs. Carlyle—returned to call again, admittedly perhaps the best-known leading social figure in Edinburgh, now that Scott had sorrowfully and proudly absented himself.

Scott was fated to remain outside all knowledge of Carlyle, and one may surmise that Carlyle did not forgive him his unconscious neglect. It was perhaps provoking to the eager, ambitious young Carlyle and his fascinating young wife that Scott, who may have listened to Goethe's remarkable praise of Carlyle from Goethe's own lips, and actually once received a medal from Goethe to deliver to Carlyle, should yet have shown no inclination to avail himself of the opportunity and interview the man for himself. But Goethe acted unwisely, in fact if not in intention. Poor Scott had other and fifty times more important things to think of than Carlyle and his wife, and the Carlyles should have known that and readily pardoned him. Is not that, however, too much to require from weak human nature?

Scott's was as kind a heart and helping a hand as Goethe's own. He forgot, as we shall see, all about the medal of "Goethe's head" and the young man Carlyle he was to give it to. His memory, one of the finest ever granted the great, was beginning to perish, and Scott would test himself furtively and pathetically to see whether the threatened paralysis had drawn nearer the citadel. Carlyle is not so very much to blame, but he and his wife might have remembered that the whole world was not thinking of them as Goethe did, and took as yet comparatively little interest in their concerns, since vastly more important

matters called for instant and imperious attention. The world to-day thinks rather of the fate-stricken, wounded Sir Walter, broken in health and genius, repeating these furtive memory exercises, watching the pen drop from his nerveless fingers, and bursting into tears. "No rest for Sir Walter but in the grave!" What matter if that tired brain forgot Goethe's kindly but onerous commission? Carlyle duly recovered his Goethe medal and wrote later his essay on "Sir Walter Scott," and thought himself "ill used." So did Mrs. Carlyle; but not so the world, which shakes its wise head merely and apologises for the petulance of youth.

Goethe's first letter had been answered, naturally, with profound and affectionate esteem. A copy of the *Schiller* had been sent, and was to produce another letter from Goethe of warm praise and confident prophecy. Carlyle *contra mundum* was less terrifying now that Goethe was on Carlyle's side. Mrs. Carlyle was eagerly introduced to the great man's ken, and probably sent verses (poor verses, but mine own!) for those kindly old eyes to read and acknowledge in the verse of Goethe!

Mrs. Carlyle was shrewd just as Carlyle himself was downright and self-centred. Carlyle was honestly taken up with himself, and not much besides. The correspondence with Goethe was doubtless made the most of and turned to instant advantage by Mrs. Carlyle. To Jeffrey, with all his ability so far beneath Goethe's ken yet with all a literary man's admiration for a literary genius, and to the rest of enlightened Edinburgh of the day, Carlyle's friendship with Goethe must have appeared notable and remarkable,

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a distinct and peculiar honour awarded to Carlyle alone. That disposes us the better to understand how he had already attained a reputation for being marvellously deep and capable even among people who disagreed most with his tenets. All suspect that what they cannot understand must be very profound, and Carlyle's reputation stood far higher than it otherwise would, or a little later actually did. He was a "German mystic" of whom anything might be expected. Goethe, who had himself struggled and succeeded beyond the reach even of envy, rightly foresaw this good effect and tried to further it at every opportunity. The real worth to Carlyle, the obligation in him for later fame and success to the great German, was recognised indeed by himself, but his acknowledgment ignored the real and practical worldly benefits conferred in its almost exclusive gratitude for spiritual help afforded.

Goethe's early friendship and prophetic recognition were worth far more to Thomas Carlyle than has yet been made apparent. In marrying Mrs. Carlyle, Carlyle unconsciously assured for himself that he would reap all the advantages possible from such adventitious aids. This became apparent at once on Carlyle's first reappearance in Edinburgh, where he stood out not only as the recognised best translator of Goethe, but as one whose work had received the remarkable distinction of being praised and prophesied of by the Master himself. Mrs. Carlyle, his wife, in that comfortable and refined but distant retreat of the married pair, could on occasion show the Master's own signature and letter. These were doubtless frequently shown, and always ad-

mired. Carlyle had acted wisely in marrying Jane Welsh.

Jeffrey in due time received his first contribution from Carlyle and both admired and printed it. He requested another. When *he* suggested, however, he found to his surprise that he struck granite! Carlyle would only write what he would, which, as he explained, meant in his own case what he could. Soon Carlyle began to offend. Ardent enthusiasts found to their chagrin that on some subjects Carlyle's views bitterly offended them. They were not to blame. Neither was Carlyle. The new writer was simply writing original thought, and the mediocre mind was naturally alarmed.

What Carlyle forgot was that editors would not and could not insert whatever contributors chose unless these contributors were very harmless persons, without the risk of losing steadily a certain portion of offended "constant readers." If a literary man demands freedom, the editor equally must demand absolute power of rejection. Carlyle demanded the first, and for awhile editors found him an acquisition. Probably he was eager, to begin with at least, to show an agreement with their wishes. But as the power within grew he desired more and more to prove them all wrong; and the editors duly invoked their power of rejection. In the end Carlyle was driven from Edinburgh by sheer scarcity of courageous and as yet unoffended editors and publishers to publish what he wrote. This was all very natural and not at all the wonderful, peculiar, anti-Carlyle force Carlyle himself imagined it to be. It must have happened so to every original mind; for success consists merely in

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the perfect personal adaptation of oneself to one's surroundings. If one cannot identify oneself with the existing conditions, one cannot expect success. One never attains it.

Carlyle played a losing game, therefore, in Edinburgh, as every one in his position must. Opportunity had come, but he was not yet able to seize it. He was not independent, and therefore he had to please editors. He refused to consider them even, because in truth he could not. He was the wiser man and right where they were wrong. Carlyle worked for eternity, not for immediate success. At first his position was bitter enough. The bitterness increased until it was literally Carlyle *contra mundum*. But Carlyle won.

The wife who had so hesitatingly flung in her lot with his proved the truest and staunchest of allies. She too had all to lose. Carlyle was her all in all. His defeat meant proof of her own folly in uniting her fortunes to his, and that was too bitter a pill to swallow. One must confess it was well the case was so, for the coming conflict was to be very bitter and very prolonged.

Ten years after marriage Carlyle had his foot firmly on the ladder but not sooner, although he had then already written and published the very cream of his intellect, works of genius as original as brilliant, massy essays of solid gold, and had already expounded almost to its last detail his own peculiar message and creed. Twenty years later he stands at the head of British Literature, unequalled, almost unchallenged, admitted into any and every society, the valued friend and guest of peers, the acknowledged master of many



of the finest spirits of the time. "My ambition has been gratified," wrote Mrs. Carlyle to John Forster, "beyond my wildest dreams, and I am miserable." Miss Welsh little knew the greatness of the man she married when she married him. That she did love him with more than usual intensity is made evident by a hundred letters. Carlyle loved her very tenderly and very deeply. Her death broke his power at one blow and the man lingered pitifully, a lonely, sorrowful old man whose triumph, like Johnson's, had come too late. What was amiss?

"No talent for the market, thought I—none; the reverse rather." So Carlyle sorrowfully noted in his journal at this time. The entry may explain why Carlyle has always been the god of the literary young man's idolatry. Carlyle tried so hard to swim with the times consistently with his conscience, and failed so lamentably. He would have liked so well to please editors, but could not. So he defied them. With a wife to support he was prepared to stretch conscience as far as ever it could honourably be stretched. There can be little doubt of that. We do not need to accept Carlyle as a fanatic on the matter of the rights of contributors. He was ready enough to please but he could and would write to no man's order. Too great and original himself to be an editor, far less could he trim his sails to suit editors, study the journalistic signs of the times and satisfy "public requirements." He tried and failed, and young men are consoled when they learn that Carlyle suffered as they suffer, was told "his style was at fault" and his matter literally of no importance or unadulterated rubbish! Carlyle's style was not at fault. It was a very good

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style, but not nearly so brilliant and picturesque as it became later. Still less was there any lack of quality in the matter.

Carlyle failed because he could not persuade editors to accept the articles he wrote. The editors were good judges, so good that they probably interpreted the time perfectly correctly in fearing it could not appreciate Carlyle. Carlyle was original but he was consummately great ; so great that these editors could not recognise he was a greater man than themselves.

*German Romance* appeared late in the winter of 1826, published by Tait. Carlyle was busy at this time and editors were complaisant. Jeffrey was shortly to publish Carlyle's contribution, and praise was heard on all sides of the courageous young "mystic." Edinburgh did not treat Carlyle so badly as it treated Burns ; neither so brilliantly nor so cruelly. In the letter which informed his mother of the *German Romance* Carlyle mentions that Mrs. Welsh had sent them £60, but since they had determined to fight their own battles the money had been returned. He is proud of the fact and had cause to be ; but his wife does not appear so amicably in the transaction. The poor mother was accepting more than her fair share of her husband's estate, had been forced indeed to accept it, and very probably felt keenly her daughter's requirements. *She* had plenty. Refusal on Mrs. Carlyle's part was far from generous and must plainly be reckoned against her. She had so wrought upon her young husband as to be responsible in a greater degree than anybody else for his almost savage determination to fight alone, refusing all aid.

At Craigenputtock we shall find that he did accept

a small loan from Jeffrey, promptly and proudly repaid within a year or so, where it would have been kinder and nobler of his wife to have urged him to have recourse to the ever generous Mrs. Welsh. The Carlyles were a peculiar pair and it is never to be forgotten that Mrs. Carlyle was always legally and morally entitled to money help from her father's estate and from her mother which she refused to accept, even in their hardest struggles. It was unkind pride of no very creditable character which prevented Mrs. Carlyle accepting her own money, because it had passed through the hands of her mother! Her action bore heavily on her husband.

Dr. John Carlyle was their first and a welcome visitor. The favourite brother of Carlyle and already indebted to his generosity, the Doctor was admitted at once into the good graces and affections of his clever sister-in-law. He stayed some months with the newly married couple, himself looking around for some situation or suitable opportunity for his own advancement and receiving every help, letter, and recommendation his brother and she could lend him. They wrote to their London friends in his interest, and Mrs. Montagu exerted herself in John's behalf, as Carlyle's letters to her testify.

"After breakfast," Carlyle writes to Alexander, "the good wife and the Doctor retire upstairs to the drawing-room, a little place all fitted up like a lady's work-box." He himself sat "scribbling" till one or two o'clock, when he sallied forth to the city, or seaward in the opposite direction. Returning at four, he ate his "mutton chop." After dinner they all "read languages" till coffee or tea (about nine, probably),

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and "so on till bedtime." The day thus spent seems busy, profitable and pleasant for all parties, but as time wore on, especially when the Doctor was not present as companion for her, Mrs. Carlyle beheld the tendency of Carlyle to work and read alone wax greater and greater. It became more and more imperative and in practice more frequent. She had soon to complain of her "loneliness."

Both possessed quick tempers and were readily roused by unusual or extraordinary incidents. Both complained of ill-health and lack of sleep, while both blamed and abused their surroundings. But no serious outward fault can ever be detected, no serious disagreement, not even a quarrel! To the most critical eye of the most curious neighbour the marriage of the Carlyles must have appeared a success so far, and fortunate for both parties alike.

After Carlyle's death the world professed to discover profound and persistent disagreement and took Mrs. Carlyle's published letters as proof of her misery. But even Froude telling the truth and only the truth had no letters to print in any grave way condemnatory of either. The world may be pardoned being misled because stranger problem was never presented. The marriage was a miserable failure, cries Mrs. Carlyle, while Carlyle later is seen bowed and broken with remorseful sorrow. Yet no disagreement, no sound and fury, no crisis or critical danger ever appears. Surely it is a mystery. Yet after all a very plain one, as we hope to prove. Everything points to the truthfulness and discretion of Froude, but not to his comprehension of the facts. He was unaware of their significance.

"Of Society," wrote Carlyle in 1827, "we have abundance. People come on foot, on horseback and even in wheeled carriages to see us, most of whom Jane receives upstairs and dispatches with assurances that the weather is good, bad or indifferent, and hints that their friendship passes the love of women. We receive invitations to dinner also; but Jane has a circular—or rather two circulars—one for those she values, and one for those she does not value; and one or the other of these she sends in excuse. Thus we give no dinners and take none."

The words are a revelation but may easily pass unobserved in the pages of Froude as to the real character of Mrs. Carlyle. We know her as Carlyle saw her and lamented her. But those shrewd observing eyes were never deceived. In the contemporary letters he has no agonies of memory to inspire him with saint worship. He saw his wife very clearly while yet she was beside him and this revelation is from the same Carlyle. Through it we discern the "Society" lady Mrs. Carlyle actually was, for all the companionship of her husband (the hater of sham and pretence) no more sincere than the average Society lady of our acquaintance, bidding "good-bye" in the usual "gushing" manner, with two circulars, one for those she wishes to have little or no more to do with, who are not "valuable" or whom she dislikes.

"To three or four people we give notice that we are always at home on Wednesdays. Few Wednesday evenings pass without some decent soul presenting himself."

Mrs. Carlyle writes as cheerily to old Mrs. Carlyle, the mother. Froude, however, does not reveal how

she begins her letter,—“ My dear Mother ”—or otherwise ; nor how she closed it,—“ Welsh ” or “ Carlyle.” Yet those two “ little things ” would tell so much.

Carlyle is “ working on a new book,” she writes in February 1827, but if so the labour came to nothing. She invites the little Jean, Carlyle’s young sister, to see them. “ It is my husband’s worst fault to me that I will not or cannot speak,” she complains. “ Often when he has talked for an hour without answer he will beg for some signs of life on my part, and the only sign I can give is a little kiss. Well, that is better than nothing, don’t you think so ? ”

The picture conjured up from the void by these words is a very pretty one, too prettily and sacredly domestic to be commented on. Carlyle was always renowned as a “ brilliant talker,” the most brilliant of his day. We can see that it was natural for him to assume the lead and conduct a monologue. Later he encountered trouble at London tables, where other men of genius expected the same rôle and resented Carlyle snatching it from them.

It is instructive to note the different fashions and customs of great men in these respects when contrasted with each other. Macaulay was another brilliant conversationalist, but the observing Mrs. Brookfield noted that Macaulay always waited till silence was secured. Carlyle bore other people down. Once, says Mrs. Brookfield, someone asked Macaulay a question concerning Joanna Baillie or some such person. Others were speaking and for five minutes no answer was returned. One might think the query overlooked. But no : during a lull Macaulay saw his chance, and with even voice responded, “ You asked

me a question concerning Joanna Baillie. I answer it thus," and proceeded on a lengthy but interesting and amazingly well-informed harangue while every one maintained a perfect silence.

In London, thirty years later, an acute critic, the husband of this same Mrs. Brookfield, a famous clergyman of the day, noted concerning Mrs. Carlyle that "the drifting of the wife's mind is connected with want of rudder, compass, or pole-star, in the way of belief."

Mrs. Carlyle at no time before or after marriage possessed any definite system of belief. We have already noted her correspondence with her future husband. He is then by far the stronger and more moral of the two, while she is sustained in the straight path of her higher nature by his influence. It was inevitable Carlyle could give her nothing but what he himself possessed, and while sustaining and defending her against her own meaner nature Carlyle could give her no "assurance of the next world," while he himself had always believed the essential truth of the old Scots Calvinism. That sufficed for him, but her sceptical and mocking mind was starved by constant association with his own keenly sceptical if Theistic intellect. Any form of emotional, even sensuous belief must have been better for Mrs. Carlyle than this; but Carlyle was not to blame for his wife's failure to receive from him what he never had in his possession to impart.

Mrs. Carlyle, it will be seen, did not always appear to her contemporaries as the light, airy, witty apparition Froude and her husband saw and admired. "Mrs. Carlyle's instinct was to take the lead," says

Mrs. Brookfield again. "She had a fatal propensity for telling her stories at extraordinary length. With her Scotch accent and her perseverance in finishing off every detail, those who were merely friendly acquaintances and not devotees sometimes longed for an abridgment, and perhaps also to have their own turn in the conversation." This is a companion picture to Froude's, the same yet how different! We believe it is as truthful a presentment, for Mrs. Carlyle believed she was unfairly crushed into silence by her illustrious husband and rather resented it. What she did not know was that she was *not* the brilliant conversationalist her husband was acknowledged to be and that no jealousy of her powers, or unlovely disregard of his wife's superior claims, was at the bottom of Carlyle's overbearing manner to her and all others in conversation. The world was not so eager to hear Mrs. Carlyle as that lady herself supposed.

Carlyle's own appearance at this period must have been much the same as when we saw him in London, not so well dressed perhaps nor so fashionably, but very different from the careless and indifferent Carlyle of fame and name. He did not order many suits of clothes from London. Perhaps £6 a suit was beyond his purse, but Carlyle was always neat and orderly, if plainly and unfashionably dressed. He was a devotee of the "morning tub," and such a man is rarely offensively indifferent to the claims of dress. He hated shams but he had a keen eye for realities. Not only was this the case, but in Edinburgh he lived with a wife who had very keen eyes indeed for appearances and all they implied.



Mrs. Carlyle, says Froude, was always well and neatly and tastefully dressed all the time he knew her. In her youth she would be even more careful of such matters. Mrs. Brookfield speaks of her as she saw her and met her at hospitable Society tables in 1855 when Carlyle had realised his fame among all the discerning. It will be admitted little need be deducted and much could be added to the picture then drawn to fit it as presentment of her in 1827. "She is very slight," says that lady, "neat in figure, animated in expression, with very good eyes and teeth, but with no pretension to beauty."

One dapper little figure, in the Edinburgh of these days, Mrs. Carlyle took good care to fascinate, for he was a well-known man and a very influential one, leading Advocate at the Scots Bar, renowned defender of victorious criminals "who must have been hung but for his ability," and editor of an important magazine of undoubtedly universal circulation, Francis Jeffrey to wit, soon to be Lord Advocate, and to pass to the Bench, a Lord of Session or Judge of the Supreme Courts of Scotland.

Jeffrey for his part was charmed with his newly discovered, far-away "forty-second" cousin, and equally interested in the remarkable man she had married. He meant to help Carlyle and was now doing so to the best of his ability. Doubtless he hoped to secure a valuable and much-needed recruit for the Whig army. Had Carlyle betrayed any desire to be a Whig, had he been willing to run even loosely in the Whig gig, Jeffrey would have "made his name" for him and afforded him every opportunity. Alas! each contribution of this stubborn contributor and every

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conversation that passed between the two must have been more and more conclusive evidence that Carlyle saw the bait and indignantly refused it, would neither be a Whig nor believed in Whiggery! was, if the truth were told, as much Tory as Whig—with a dash of Radicalism thrown in!

Doubtless Jeffrey condoled with fascinating Mrs. Carlyle, and finding her very much of his own way of thinking, rendered her very uneasy, very impatient of her husband's mulish stubbornness and very ready with "I told you so" at every fresh instance of editorial warning. Poor Carlyle! He was assailed more cunningly than ever. Everything seemed to prove him nothing less than an obstinate fool standing in his own light,—till the tide turned. Jeffrey, however, was to remain with greater or less fervour interested in Carlyle and not unmindful of him even after the Carlyles left Edinburgh a year or so later.

Since astonishing notions prevail as to the poverty the Carlyles endured it is right to add that their first married house was a substantial little stone-built house, not fashionable or imposing but in a good neighbourhood among people of moderate income, altogether exactly the house the Carlyles would be expected to take, the best within their means. They had it excellently, tastefully and by no means cheaply furnished. They possessed a piano and one domestic servant. Ecclefechan still sent abundant supplies of the most delightful butter, eggs, meal, ham, etc., far better than shops could afford. There was never the least sign of poverty. No least debt hung over them. Every day's arrival witnessed their continued solvency. All went well till the end came. The end came precisely

because Carlyle looked ahead and could endure no debt. His wife resembled him in this respect. He saw quite clearly and abundantly early that editors were bound to fail him. He was ready and eager to fight them, but he dare not run the risk of bankruptcy. As the long strain continued, and promised only increase of tension, he reverted always in his own mind to the farming scheme which had already been initiated at Hoddam Hill and had promised so well then.

Mrs. Carlyle's own estate was now vacant (as it was so often to become vacant) and urgently required a tenant. The estate was unproductive and poor, affording a bare subsistence for the hardest toil of the most enterprising tenant. On the revenue derivable from it Mrs. Welsh depended for all her income. It was a serious matter that Craigenputtock should be empty, and if ever Carlyle resolved again to attempt a Hoddam Hill enterprise Craigenputtock was the destined place where the experiment could be tried with least disadvantage.

Alexander was still merely assisting his father, but was growing too old to be much longer content without a farm of his own. He desired perhaps to marry. Alexander was now free to resume his old place. Far from being the sad and unfortunate resolve Mrs. Carlyle and Froude and Jeffrey considered it, removal to Craigenputtock was possibly the wisest thing Carlyle could have done. To remain in Edinburgh meant perhaps surrender to the readiest "pot-boiling" appointment that offered, ready affluence, local fame and—nothing more. The strain fell on Carlyle, not on his wife. He, not she, had to find

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the wherewithal, the needful money. Had Carlyle yielded to Jeffrey and her, he had never reached his goal.

Half consciously he knew it. His wife's silence (if that were really all) he endured; to Jeffrey he was very civil, though determined to preserve his independence. Craigenputtock was no mere determination of a fanatic, but really the wisest resort of Carlyle in his then condition of unprogressive existence and threatened failure. After Craigenputtock—he knew it only too well—came the deluge.

Froude says at this time, "The novel was a failure and eventually had to be burnt." If novel there were it could not have been *Wotton Reinfred*, which was not burnt, and has been published since Carlyle's death. At whatever time *Wotton Reinfred* was written for some reason the manuscript has been preserved. Probably Mrs. Carlyle preserved it.

*German Romance* had brought no more money in its train than the fine *Life of Schiller* had. *Wilhelm Meister* sold well, but the publishers were not eager for "more of the same stuff." Regular work was not to be had, and even with a friend like Jeffrey magazine work was precarious. A vacant Craigenputtock seemed more and more specially destined for Carlyle's use. His wife had no choice but obey, and indeed was ever too loyal and too ready to fight the long struggle fairly to throw it up now that, as usual, she was doubtful of success. We may guess with what disappointment and regret she contemplated the loss of her pleasant little home in the city and life on a lonely farm with her husband at Craigenputtock.

"At no moment, even by a look, did she ever say

so," writes Carlyle in his mournful *Reminiscence*, speaking of this time and his wife's attitude towards the proposal to retire to Craigenputtock. One cannot accept this generous testimony quite literally. There is no need. We know from Froude what Mrs. Carlyle really thought and how bitterly Froude, in her name, resented it. Yet if the lady, or Froude, imagined that London would have proved any different from Edinburgh at that moment one can only confess one sees no ground for that belief. The real truth was that publishing lay under a heavy shadow. House after house had gone crash. Even Scott was ruined, and the great-hearted owner of magnificent Abbotsford was a bankrupt. A business man would have told Carlyle and his wife that there was no hope for a young man without capital or connections in the world of literature at that moment.

Carlyle was ever his own shrewdest adviser. Fortunately for the world he was commonly left to his own counsel in the end. At the moment, however, no man can see the cause of his own failure. In the stress of the actual conflict a strong man can only suppose he is not strong enough; a determined man to retrench and prepare for a harder struggle.

From Dumfries, whither he had gone to investigate Craigenputtock, Carlyle wrote his first love-letter to his wife after their marriage, answering her loving epistle with its not very witty "My cheap" instead of "My dear." "Oh, Jeannie, Oh, my wife! we will never part, never through eternity itself; but I will love thee and keep thee in my heart of hearts! that is, unless I grow a very great fool—which, indeed, this talk doth somewhat betoken." The loving rhapsody ends always

with chopfallen allusion to the "light raillery" awaiting it! Carlyle carefully dismounts from his Pegasus and rejoins the earth before he closes the letter. Strange pair! For the husband is really the more emotional and warm-hearted of the two for all his sternness and dignity. The Irving embroglio, however, had shown what latent passion and warmth of love lay dormant in Jane Welsh. She loved Carlyle very tenderly and devotedly and very sincerely. She respected him above all men. But it was the very tragedy of her life that she did not love him as she could have loved the man who was master of her heart.

Carlyle meant to retire to Craigenputtock during the summer, so soon indeed as Alexander had put the farmhouse to rights, arranged its disorder and effected needful repairs. But the outlook, which had appeared black entirely, now changed to an appearance betokening better and brighter hopes. On his return to Edinburgh, having settled everything in spite of the fact that Alexander was not very hopeful or bright at the prospect before him, Carlyle set diligently to work to complete the essay on German literature which he had promised to Jeffrey and Jeffrey had accepted.

He went to Parliament House to interview Jeffrey on the subject, and very naturally found Jeffrey as busy as could be. For all his brusqueness Carlyle was shrewd, and though he noted the big man's haste and abrupt request for "the article, the article," he knew that Jeffrey was favourably impressed, so he willingly waited an hour or so and accompanied the Advocate back to his rooms when the Court business was over. Jeffrey found the contribution which Carlyle had

brought him in the brown paper parcel too lengthy for insertion in the first or second of the ensuing numbers but "would place it somewhere." Meanwhile he was ready to accept a *short* contribution for the number immediately to be published. Carlyle was delighted and hurried home—with risen hopes. He delayed his departure for Craigenputtock, but apparently Alexander was already on the spot and the farm was "taken." Sooner or later, during these months he must take up his residence there if nothing intervened for his relief. The die had been cast.

As matter of history, however, Carlyle did not leave Edinburgh in May, or even at all during the summer of 1827. He actually delayed till March 1828. His wife must have striven hard to retain him longer, and very apparently it was Jeffrey's kindness which induced him to stay so long as he did. No love for the country and green paths, the high thinking and good rough living of rural solitudes guided his retiral to "the Craig." Merely that the black depression in literature continued and Carlyle who had to endure the full stress of responsibility and had a livelihood to earn could not tolerate living longer in suburban Edinburgh with so precarious a sword of Damocles hung over his head.

Mrs. Carlyle's letter to her husband while he was on this business at Dumfries informs us that she was still diligently in pursuit of literary glories, in deference apparently to his urging her to continue. He had hoped, as we have seen, "to stand a-tiptoe at her name," and in some moderate fashion he must have believed she possessed genius. Froude, who met her at the height of her husband's reputation, was impressed

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by her wit. She herself sincerely believed that Carlyle's own magnificent foliage effectually crushed the life out of the little flower which drooped in its shadow. It is a pathetic fancy and reveals her "heart's bitterness." The one warrant we possess for that view are the verses written at Craigenputtock, which we shall note in their place. Otherwise nothing remains but her own incomparable letters, unconscious efforts which would have lost their charm had she been labouring for effect. In any event, Carlyle encouraged her, and at Comely Bank she is still reading and writing about the great poets of Greece and other significant subjects. Carlyle was not to blame if in time she realised she had nothing to say by *his* side at all events and wisely refrained from saying anything.

Froude is silent as to what came of her work, if indeed she did put pen to paper and so preserved her thoughts. Had Carlyle found any "remains" he would certainly have published them for his own satisfaction, for he had a very noble belief in her genius and was very repentant for Fate's severity to his wife. She must herself have burned everything—or produced nothing. The poem has found its way into the *Poetry of the Nineteenth Century* written by women, by no means unimportant but devoid of much significance in literature.

Carlyle's first contribution to Jeffrey's *Edinburgh Magazine* was the essay on "Jean Paul" preserved among the *Miscellanies*. Carlyle is there seen rapidly nearing full development; the style clear, pregnant, and powerful; not peculiar, scarcely even characteristic. It aroused the instant attention of the discerning



Jeffrey, who was well content and believed he had met a genius. He readily agreed to allow Carlyle to introduce the British public to his peculiar fashion of regarding German literature.

Carlyle in the *Reminiscences* gives a very full and wonderfully frank description of his own notions concerning this matter at the time. De Quincey, he thought, had rather exaggerated the greatness of Jean Paul as a humorist. In later years Carlyle leaned to the opinion he had done the same, and was inclined to fancy that perhaps he should have called attention rather to our own *Hudibras* or *Tristram Shandy* if "the humorist" were to be his theme. The revelation proves how sincerely Carlyle believed his own course. Had he written about these early loves of his own youthful reading he might have found editors even more hostile and less impressed by his cleverness and knowledge. It proves too that he never yet understood the trade conditions which in the end ensured his own success and accounted for the success of his translation work from the German. It is a reproach to Carlyle and probably the reason of our national neglect to commemorate him in marble that he did so much for the Germans and so little for the British. But his circumstances left him no choice.

Craigenputtock loomed before him and it did not require his wife to whisper to him the hope that perhaps there might be no need to go there. He delayed all through this winter of 1827, working hard at these essays in German literature and steadily gaining in public esteem. Each contribution to the *Edinburgh Magazine* secured attention and

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"went home." He moved personally in the best society Edinburgh afforded. Indeed, according to his status at the moment viewed from the worldly standpoint Carlyle always appeared in the best society obtainable, or in none. The period in Edinburgh was more Gargantuan than to-day, the period of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* when legends and sorry survivals still lingered of the old Drinking and Gossip Clubs of which Burns had seen the last.

"Christopher North," leonine John Wilson, the amazing Professor of Moral Philosophy, big-hearted giant of the time, was of too full-blooded, boisterous and "natural" a temperament to prove sympathetic to Carlyle's sterner, more limited and graver personality. Carlyle probably had a hundredfold the intensity and grip of Wilson, but Wilson had more shining and attractive talents though of far inferior order. Nothing could come of the friendship, but it may be noted to Wilson's credit and Carlyle's that they mutually drew to each other though of such diverse or even opposite tastes. Wilson called on Carlyle and Carlyle met him at supper, "a broad sincere man of six feet, with long dishevelled flax-coloured hair, and two blue eyes keen as an eagle's. He snuffed and smoked cigars, and drank liquors, and talked in the most indescribable style."

Here is John Wilson to the life! the real living Wilson sketched off in fewest words by the master portrait painter and unerring caricaturist. For Wilson's amazing qualities, physical, gustatory, and literary, are all properly and duly noted. It is easy to see that while at Comely Bank Carlyle still looked up to and admired Jeffrey and Wilson and Lockhart,

the literary men of his period, met them, found them "good fellows," fond of better living, eating and drinking than contented him, but sound purveyors of good literature. Himself in his own heart knew he had something to tell them, and perhaps they believed that too. Craigenputtock began to recede, but his brother was already there and waiting his arrival somewhat impatiently.

The second of Goethe's letters came to Comely Bank. In August 1827 Carlyle received word that a packet from Germany lay at Leith awaiting his instructions. He went to the Customs forthwith and gladly. In these days correspondence was more uncertain than it is to-day, and since taxation was more general the Customs House was more frequently concerned with it.

Goethe sent beautiful gifts in exchange for the *Schiller*. "The daintiest boxie you ever saw," wrote the enraptured Carlyle to his mother, "a beautiful marriage present,"—for Carlyle had carefully told the good old man of his intended and actual marriage. "Five beautiful little volumes" came for "the valued marriage pair Carlyle," "two little books" for Carlyle himself, two medals, one of Goethe himself and one of his father and mother, "and lastly the prettiest wrought-iron necklace, with a little figure of the poet's face set in gold, for my dear spouse; and a dashing pocket-book for me." Truly a splendid and welcome gift and well worth fifty journeys to Leith Customs House to obtain. Goethe had been generous. He believed in his distant correspondent and enthusiastic eulogist, and he had a keen prophetic eye. That he was so anxious to support his

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literary judgment by valuable gifts is to the credit of his heart. Critics have not been wanting who have pointed out that Goethe at this time was very anxious about his European reputation and keenly interested (like a sensible man) in newly rising powers in foreign lands likely to extend his influence and incidentally his fame. In later years Carlyle himself recognised that and weakened a little in his idolatry. But after all it is but to say that Goethe acted on the highest motives, which as always happens pointed to his own highest interests also.

A kind letter accompanied the gifts, which revealed how acutely Goethe had discerned the strength of Carlyle. So early as this he praises him for what he has done for Germany. And well he might! Goethe and Germany have been thankful, but what would even Goethe have thought of this great British subject devoting the strength of his intellect to the elucidation of Frederick the Great! Surely *that* was a blunder which is said to be worse than a crime! In truth there was no necessity for it, and the fact is Carlyle was not patriotic to the extent of governing his artistic efforts by patriotism. He realised perhaps that he had received no aid from Britain and he granted his native country little more than his splendid essay on Burns. For England he wrought rather better, and, thanks to Carlyle, Cromwell now stands out for ever the great if rugged man he really was. But Carlyle who might have done so much has done comparatively little for the history of his native Britain. It is true, however, that he bequeathed us his grand life-example, the record of his heroism and achievement. Britain may never

be enthusiastically grateful to Carlyle. Germany may, but that remains to be seen. For the present Carlyle's lofty appreciation of Germany has perhaps rather disposed that nation to undervalue British achievements and history.

Mrs. Carlyle carefully improved on her own introduction to Goethe and was visibly delighted at this first result from her association with Carlyle. For her it seemed an earnest that she had chosen well, that Carlyle was right and that her husband would be a great man yet. The thought was supremely acceptable. Carlyle might safely be allowed to guide their joint career since already he had earned such praise as this. The direct message from Goethe in short pleased the young married pair much as it would have pleased any one in their position. It is all very well in late life to be cool and apathetic; but at the time Carlyle's heart beat the quicker, and as he returned from Leith his feet could hardly carry him quickly enough back to his eagerly awaiting "Jeannie," that August day in 1827 when Goethe's marriage present arrived. Of course all their friends, Jeffrey, the "silent" Mrs. Carlyle herself, and even the despondent Carlyle (dare he but trust this temporary buoyancy) now thought that removal to Craigenputtock was "fantastic and unreasonable." In later life it seemed so, but *Sartor Resartus* could have been evolved nowhere else. That alone is evidence sufficient and complete of the wisdom of their removal thither.

Goethe's letter impressed Jeffrey. That is apparent. The Carlyles were invited to Craigcrook, the splendid mansion near Edinburgh which was the

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country residence of the "little advocate." Of course they went and the families became intimate in a sense. The importance to Carlyle and his wife of this frank social recognition must have been considerable. Clearly Goethe's opinion had impressed Jeffrey and Jeffrey's own private opinion supported Goethe. Carlyle was beginning to be vastly admired in Edinburgh and Craigenputtock in consequence seemed farther off than ever.

The best result of it all, however, was that other editors now sought out Carlyle. His feet were on the ladder. Goethe's praise had at least secured that. The opportunity, it seemed, was to be given. Could Carlyle maintain himself? Could he seize it?

Being dependent on his own exertions and shrewd always, he himself had his doubts, not of his capacity and ability, but of the public who were willing to buy books and of the willingness of editors to afford him a hearing. Carlyle would only write his best. He was not able to write about all things indiscriminately. He would only write of what he was master and when he was inspired. And the process of preparation was slow even to one so industrious. Would editors accept of what he did write? At present it seemed as though they would, but he knew that in time they would tire of him. Nor was it an unreasonable fear. .

The Carlyles, as we have said, were never very poor. Holidays were always possible and were always forthcoming. Carlyle was no man to hoard up money for the "rainy day." He was saving and frugal, but at no time was he compelled to stint himself of food or the requirements of good health.

Every year witnessed a health-giving holiday. The Carlyles had plenty of places to go to. During this summer of 1827 the young married pair visited old Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle at Scotsbrig, a glorious holiday to a secluded farm amid splendid scenery where they were heartily welcome. Few people are so fortunately situated in this regard as the Carlyles were. But one does not read that they were in the least grateful for their good fortune. Mrs. Welsh had come on a visit to Comely Bank in April of the same year.

At this time the London University was in process of foundation. Irving was one of those to the front in the discussions this necessitated. While at Scotsbrig on holiday Carlyle had seen and spoken to his old friend who took always so sincere an interest in his welfare. Perhaps there was now a little constraint between the two. Such was almost unavoidable, since the marriage of the one to the "sweetheart" in bygone days of the other. The old expansive friendship was no longer possible, perhaps scarcely even to be desired. Carlyle himself felt no grudge, but there was now an outspoken Mrs. Carlyle. Possibly Irving had noted in his own complacent fashion how curiously Carlyle had seemed to benefit by his own misfortunes. Yet Irving too had ever a noble mind and if he entertained the thought it must have been expelled a moment later.

Irving had reported this new movement in London and had told Carlyle the movement was really to found a "secular" University. "You will see it will be secular all the same, perhaps atheistic." So had Irving reported.

From London he now wrote that a Professorship of Moral Philosophy, or English Literature or Rhetoric, was to be set up—the name not yet decided—but certainly “secular,” and apparently a Professorship for which Carlyle might appear a very eligible candidate. Patronage lay with the Crown in the person of Brougham the Lord Chancellor, and Irving counselled an immediate canvass.

Carlyle remarked to his brother John concerning Irving's letter, “The Lord and he seem hand and glove; the Lord, he says, blesses him; his Church rejoices in the Lord.” Yet he adds, “I do honestly believe that there is much precious truth among all this cant.” There was no meanness in Carlyle, but surely the letter spoke for itself.

Carlyle was always mindful of his own private affairs once a good friend had been found to find out all about “situations vacant.” He was not eager for Craigenputtock nor apparently anxious over Alexander now busy there and loyally expecting that he would fulfil his promise. He went first to Jeffrey, as was shrewd and natural, since Jeffrey was of the same political party as Brougham and was soon indeed to be Lord Advocate in the same Government. Jeffrey was willing, but also honourable. Probably he was only too well aware that Brougham would “gang his ain gait” however friends advised, and was but too likely to have some name already in contemplation. Applicants there were bound to be in hundreds. Carlyle had already (privately) confessed to a horror of teaching. He would not have made a good Professor, one doubts; for he was too original, and at present (as Jeffrey sagely pointed out) he was



too German and metaphysical. Carlyle as usual, however, ignores Jeffrey's real difficulties and was obviously chagrined. Yet his own success later proves that Jeffrey was right. The application, if made, came to nothing. Perhaps Carlyle's candidature did not extend so far as a formal application.

As matter of fact Jeffrey took an inordinate amount of trouble which ought to be recorded to his credit. Had he read the *Reminiscence* devoted to himself, had he returned to "the glimpses of the moon" *Shakespeare* to do so, he must have considered both the Carlyles deeply ungrateful. For the kind-hearted, busy "little advocate" not only entertained the pair at dinner at Craigmook and talked the matter over with them so as to impress even Mrs. Carlyle with the notion that he himself regarded Carlyle as the best man who could be appointed, but he promised to interview Brougham personally in his favour. He did so while on a visit to Brougham, but reported sadly that the Chancellor was apathetic, "shifted the conversation," and was disposed to think Irving's recommendation amounted to very little! Who can doubt that Brougham was sincere after that? Sincere, at least, in what he said to Jeffrey! Carlyle, however, remained hopeful, without reason. The world has long made up its mind not to blame Brougham for failing to nominate Thomas Carlyle to a London University Professorship. Had he done so we had never possessed our Carlyle or *Sartor Resartus*.

Meanwhile all Edinburgh praised the essays as at intervals they began to appear. Carlyle might well have been pleased with his admirers. He reports

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that De Quincey has praised the "State of German Literature" in his *Saturday Post*. Sir William Hamilton, another great Edinburgh Professor, now Carlyle's friend, expounder of the Hamiltonian theory of consciousness, called it "cap'tal," while John Wilson told a mutual friend "that it had done him a deal o' good." De Quincey called, polite as ever, the smallest surely (in physical stature) of all recorded literary men, whom witty Mrs. Carlyle would have liked "to keep in a little box to carry about," in true Brobdignagian fashion. Her wit is rarely recondite, fairly obvious—and always personal. Carlyle's own description of De Quincey and the bragging letter to his brother John that he had given him the "autobiography of Jean Paul, just received from Germany, to translate for Blackwood," that so he might "earn a few pounds" to stave off hunger yet awhile, are in Carlyle's worst manner. One respects the gentlemanly little De Quincey going out of his way to call and make himself pleasant to this remarkable young married pair rather than Carlyle himself writing so bitterly of his kind-hearted visitor.

Carlyle was earning money and for a while he was content, but Craigenputtock was waiting, even getting insistent. Carlyle was loth to go. He had plenty of good friends in Edinburgh, and these were now advising an application for the chair of Dr. Chalmers, that of Moral Philosophy, in St. Andrews University. Chalmers had just been appointed Professor of Divinity in Edinburgh. There can be no doubt Carlyle was well qualified (though he hated teaching!), and he immediately set to work procuring "testimonials" from all and sundry likely

to be of the least use. He encountered no mean difficulties in this task, for he was always held in high esteem and admiration. All to whom he applied sent excellent testimonials; no candidate could have presented better.

The patrons of such chairs, whoever they are, elect whomsoever they choose for whatever reason seems good to them. Goethe, Buller (the Indian judge of his acquaintance), Irving, one of the "lights of London" in those days, Brewster, his old powerful helper, and Leslie, his old Professor, all supported Carlyle. Goethe's testimonials may have alarmed the good patrons. Irving's very long letter may more credibly have done so. But in any event Carlyle was not elected.

His remarks on the unfair methods in vogue then (and now) of filling up chairs are unusual in one curious feature only. With all his trenchant abuse of the wrong methods he hints at no right method. As little does he consider the interests of those most interested, the interests of the students themselves. These may be very poor judges of Professors, but their interests are surely paramount. An indifferent "teacher" is likely to be a useless Professor.

Carlyle took this defeat so badly that his violence reveals inevitably how eager he has become *not* to go to Craigenputtock. He began to realise, however, that he would eventually be driven thither, and had really been wisely prophetic when he had taken over the farm in the preceding May.

His old mother visited them at Comely Bank, a visit of great interest and delight to her son, who was always so proud of her, and never ashamed of her

peasant dress and ways. It was a long journey for the old lady, almost a hundred miles by coach, and the father could not accompany her. In those days few of her class ever travelled so far, and to the end her husband never saw farther than Craigenputtock. His mother stayed with them four weeks, heard the "ministers," and saw the famous Kirks, Greyfriars with the Martyrs' Monument, John Knox's house, and the other "sights" likely to appeal to her. Her son was delighted at her eager interest and with the shrewd remarks she uttered by way of criticism. She returned home by way of Hawick, and visited some relatives there. Carlyle himself kept up a correspondence with these long after he had become famous. It is a trait in Carlyle, this of his recognition always of his peasant kindred, which ought not to be overlooked.

The *Foreign Review* meanwhile had opened its doors to him, paying him £47, he says, for his essay on "Werner." He sent on another, the "Helena," "for which I shall not get so much." The pay is wonderful when compared with what a writer in similar circumstances would be likely to obtain to-day, though all "pay" is poor enough compensation for the labour involved. For it is the fruit of a lifetime of knowledge and experience.

Craigenputtock was looming very near, and for the first time Carlyle was made to realise the disadvantages the possession of a wife entailed! Hoddam Hill existence had not included a doctor. For all his gastric miseries Carlyle never called in a physician, apparently never needed to do so. With Mrs. Carlyle the case was different. Craigenputtock was sixteen miles from the nearest doctor. Carlyle

foresaw some difficulties, but the housewife, who hated to go there, saw a hundred. Most of these were real enough, though set off by compensating advantages. The Carlyles were not unfortunate people in spite of all their moaning. To mention one small advantage even in their present situation they were possessed of what other people lacked sorely. For the removal from Craigenputtock came Alexander with a string of farm carts, who loaded the furniture for them and removed it safely all the long hill journey. Comely Bank was abandoned on the first available term-day, the 28th of May 1828. Houses are most frequently taken in Scotland by the year or half-year, and houses are vacated at two terms or termini, the "Whitsunday" or May term and the "Martinmas" or November term. In England houses are more commonly let and rents are paid monthly or quarterly.

Just before they left occurred the little affair with Sir Walter Scott which we have already recounted. Goethe must have been ignorant of the extent of Scott's breakdown or surely he would scarcely have troubled him with commissions or letters at such a time.

But in any event Carlyle duly received his medals from Goethe. He wrote an expectant letter to Scott, but naturally all was confusion in the great man's correspondence and he received no reply. Scott was not fit to attend to these extras so obligingly laid upon him by other people, and Carlyle in calmer moments might have remembered that. What Scott did do was to inform John Wilson, through whom the medals reached Carlyle in safety.

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Very proudly and indignantly the Carlyles retired to Craigenputtock, manifestly disappointed, and in after years to become angry and unreasonable. For Edinburgh, after all, had done its best, and had been very kind, hospitable, and willing to help. Carlyle went of his own free choice and wisely. At the best it can only be a surmise that he could have remained in Edinburgh and written *Sartor Resartus* under prosperous circumstances. *Sartor Resartus* is the child of Craigenputtock and of the experience gathered there and elsewhere. It is vital, to the last page, with personal experience.

## CHAPTER XVII

CRAIGENPUTTOCK—WHITSUNDAY 1828 TILL  
4TH AUGUST 1831

“GERALDINE’S Craigenputtock stories are more mythical than any of the rest.” Such was Carlyle’s verdict and it is remarkable, for Miss Geraldine Jewsbury’s Craigenputtock stories are related as Mrs. Carlyle told them to her. Nay more, they agree with the Craigenputtock notions of Froude, who derived his impressions also from Mrs. Carlyle and has adopted almost all her fancies, as we have seen. The point is of first importance, because here is the root of all the mischief from which Carlyle’s memory has suffered so grievously.

Miss Jewsbury, a lady novelist of some repute in her day, was Mrs. Carlyle’s chosen intimate, the one lady confidante we have knowledge of to whom undoubtedly Mrs. Carlyle divulged more of her own personal history and deepest most intimate thoughts and reflections than to any other person whatever. She was a great admirer of Carlyle and a disciple of sorts of his teaching.

Carlyle points out that in these stories she has mixed up mistress and servant in cases where, for example, Mrs. Carlyle is alleged to have scrubbed floors, baked bread (from necessity, not choice) and

milked cows! To Carlyle in his later years it would be something perilously near sacrilege and to be received with the deepest indignation if Miss Jewsbury were to insist that the tales were as Mrs. Carlyle herself told them. It was almost inevitable Carlyle would treat them as he did. Carlyle's own is always the absolutely truthful version. Carlyle never lied. Miss Jewsbury's information is "mythical." Yet she alleges that Mrs. Carlyle told her the information as she has written it. One is disposed to believe Miss Jewsbury. She had no motive to exaggerate Mrs. Carlyle's woes; rather the reverse, because she admired Carlyle immensely.

One sees at once Mrs. Carlyle herself is the true cause of the trouble, altogether unintentionally. Mrs. Carlyle undoubtedly preserved a "noble silence" to her husband's face and the poor widower was infinitely grateful. But she wrote contemporary letters to intimate friends descriptive of the coarse and menial work her marriage to Carlyle had reduced a lady "born to great prospects"! She possessed male friends in after years like Mazzini, of lofty and disinterested character. She discussed her husband and her husband's character with unpardonable freedom in her letters to them. She confessed in her misery that she had married "for ambition," she alleged that she was intolerably miserable. While all the time she would never have had such noble friends to write to had it not been for her ambitious marriage to Carlyle!

To Carlyle, on the other hand, she makes no specific complaint, not even when he leaves her in



the middle of the night at her mother's house and rides off to his own mother's, twenty miles away! Against Carlyle she never makes the slightest charge. Carlyle shows unconsciously, and therefore with absolute proof, that the stories of the "high-born lady" treated like a peasant have no foundation in fact and are "mythical." What is stranger than all is that Froude, with so difficult a subject in hand and with so evident a determination to be just to Carlyle, never once suspected the truth. Not once does he hint even that Mrs. Carlyle (hard put to it for some reasonable explanation of her alleged intolerable miseries) may have been exaggerating the status of her birth or magnifying the grandeur of her family. Yet it is a common enough trait. Had Froude been a Scotsman or more familiar with that country, had he been personally aware of the different social strata of a Scots country town, had he even been aware of Scots "lairdships," he must have hesitated before he too regarded Mrs. Carlyle's residence at her family "mansion" of Craigenputtock along with her husband as a patient martyrdom, a cruel wrong on his part, or at best the most thoughtless and selfish insistence on his own health requirements in detriment to hers.

It was nothing of the sort and bore no resemblance to anything of the sort. Carlyle acted for the best and reluctantly in going to Craigenputtock at all. We have tried to show that. Mrs. Carlyle was dependent on her husband, and would accept nothing in aid of him even from her own mother, who was legally and morally her grateful debtor. A nobler or more loving woman—or, to be scrupulously correct, a woman who conceived she had suffered no injury in

marriage but had gained her heart's deliberate choice—would, one thinks, have “deceived” her husband gladly, taken money which was hers in her own right, and which in fact was unfailingly pressed upon her by her mother, and not have left her husband to struggle unaided, or forced her unfortunate mother to regard herself as hard-hearted and selfish, greedily seizing everything for herself and leaving the young married pair to shift for themselves. Why did she not aid her husband? Of course he forbade her to accept any help. He had little reason to think he was regarded with any affection by her people. He insisted proudly that he would fight his own battle and hers by his own unaided efforts. But then, if Mrs. Carlyle would but have recalled how she had “rubbed it in” and had seared that proud, sensitive heart with her allusions to “the inequality of our births,” as though she had been a Princess of the Blood, she must have recognised that it was again her own most grievous fault if his pride had degenerated (as it so nearly did) into mere stupid insistence on an almost brutal independence.

These remarks are necessary to clear the ground for the reader before he is asked to study anew the actual conditions, facts, and circumstances of the life led by the Carlyles at the famous old hill-farmhouse of Craigenputtock—Craig-a-puttock, “hill of the hawks,” as the old Cymric (Strathclyde) name of it was and is.

In his eagerness to help Carlyle, Goethe prefixed an illustration of Carlyle's house (“home of the author”) as frontispiece to the German translation of Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*, which Goethe had thus early

ordered to be executed. Little wonder Carlyle loved Goethe and Germany! It may be interesting to relate here that George Moir, an Advocate of Carlyle's acquaintance, "little Geordie .Moir," afterwards a sheriff, executed the sketch from which this German frontispiece was engraved. Froude appended another picture of the house to his "First Forty Years" of Carlyle's life. The shape and appearance of the house in Carlyle's time has thus been preserved, and such houses seem to defy the ravages of time. But unfortunately, neither presentment yields very much assistance to the reader in helping him to form some conception of what a Border hill-farm means, the essential attributes which distinguish the lonely stone houses of the Border hill-farmers from other solitary farmhouses elsewhere.

The moors and hills of the Borderland of Scotland possess a beauty of their own for the heart that loves them. A pathetic sadness softens the bleakness of the loneliest moorland. The hills "dreaming of battles long ago" have a dignity and grandeur which is profoundly impressive to the historical student Carlyle was.

From the house itself, snugly nestling in the little plantation of trees around it, may be descried the great expanses of Border pasture, green against the brown of heather and bracken dotted white with grazing sheep, scarred here and there with rocky ravines and sometimes passing into marsh or bogland rent by water-filled moss holes. All about, though some miles distant, are the high green hills, rounded or saddle-backed and covered with grass to the summit. These rise clear from their burn valleys,

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where the streams glisten in the sun, tinkling merrily to the far-off river. Among these hills the rivers find their sources. Half a score of farmhouses may be seen in the far distances gleaming white against the prevailing monotony of brown and green, a fact which of itself removes wonderfully all sense of isolation which the deserted aspect of the road thither may have awakened in the visitor.

The Past lies heavy on the Border hills. The dweller there who is gifted with insight like Carlyle faces Eternity. A profound peace impresses itself insensibly upon him. The woes of the Present seem more tolerable in presence of such a majesty of pathos.

"Silent with calm regret  
That troubles not,  
They watch for suns long set  
And men forgot."

From above the house, raising its steeple five miles away, Dunscore Kirk is visible, as Carlyle pointed out to Emerson. "Christ died on the tree. That brought you and me together. Time has merely a relative existence." Dunscore village seems the limit of civilisation, but Craigenputtock lies in a wilderness beyond it. Nevertheless, whatever its aspect may be in the storms and darkness of winter, few spots on earth if any were more suitable for Carlyle's crying need than this to which Fate had driven him. Fate was not unkind to Carlyle could he have seen clearly.

Craigenputtock at a first glance and for ever after stands out the one authentic, indisputable, inevitable birthplace and cradle of *Sartor Resartus*. It is

worthy of note that a spot already famous for Cymric battles and Border chivalry should also have aided the production of this great mental achievement of the Border race, this masterpiece and most original work of Carlyle, "the greatest poem of the nineteenth century." Three of the very greatest names in Scottish history—except for Burns, indeed, all the greatest names: Hume, Scott, and Carlyle—are purely Border names.

Stone necessarily abounds in the neighbourhood as the very name signifies, and inevitably a thrifty race made use of the native stone for the erection of the farmhouse. The house of Craigenputtock is the usual whinstone severely foursquare building of the Border "lairdship" or farm, with the "onstead" or outhouses and stableyard behind, with the narrow meagre porch which shelters the front door against the blasts of winter, and with the inevitable gravel path leading up to it. The situation is not so uninviting as one has been led to expect from the Carlyle correspondence, for the outlook from the windows is into the trees which rise in front, and for three-fourths of the year these must have been a veritable bower. Craigenputtock larch, by the way, was held in high repute by the local joiners.

When Carlyle lived there (and there has been no change in this respect if in any since his day) there were really two houses. A smaller cottage stands close to the main one, built apparently for the "grieve" or factor, the foreman shepherd whom the Welshes, the lairds, had found it necessary to employ for the effective supervision of their sheep-farm. Such is a common custom in the South of Scotland,

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where a farm often supports two farmers, as it were, though the one in fact is rather the inferior tacksman of the other. Of the two houses the Carlyles of course lived in the principal one, the laird's house, while Alexander, the practical farmer, or his successor when Alexander threw it up, inhabited the little cottage beside it.

To the town-dweller like Mrs. Carlyle the house must have appeared very lonely with the nearest neighbour perhaps a mile away ; but then there was quite a little colony at Craigenputtock itself. Loneliness, too, is comparative. As matter of fact, the loneliness of the hill-farmer is neither so solitary nor complete as that of the lonely sempstress or clerk in the heart of London.

Of society indeed for the educated literary man there was little or none, but this may possibly be said of most other places. Hill-farmers are not usually educated or literary, but they are warm-hearted, hospitable, and pathetically grateful for a visit even from the unworthy. Hard drinking was common in the old days when education was less general, and Mrs. Carlyle always terrified by saying that her predecessor had succumbed to it, apparently because there was nothing else to do. Craigenputtock even to-day is isolated and unusually hard to reach, but it is a heaven on earth still one would imagine to the young, while it provides safe and snug shelter to all from the storms of winter. The Carlyles are not to be pitied altogether for their residence at Craigenputtock. Many a literary man has sighed for such another—in vain.

Apparently, however, Mrs. Carlyle did suffer a

great deal. She tells us herself that she had been brought up to great prospects, and consequently knew nothing of housewifery! She seems to have thought it right at first that Carlyle should pay for her father's blunder or worse in depriving her of the great prospects by never preparing her for the loss of them and leaving behind him no money for their support. Froude's criticism of Carlyle for his treatment of his wife at Craigenputtock means nothing more nor less than this. The lady who had been brought up to great prospects possessed none when she married Carlyle. Obviously she should have told him before marriage that she could never be a poor man's wife, but we have seen that she took great pains to prove to his mother the exact contrary. She had impressed the entire Carlyle family with the very notion that she was most peculiarly fitted to be an excellent poor man's wife.

When it came to the proof she discovered her deficiencies. In Edinburgh a good servant, who remained with her throughout her residence, had taken most of the household duties off her hands. At Craigenputtock servants were not contented to remain, since unmarried young people prefer to remain among other unmarried young people, and have no interest, as Carlyle and his wife had, to remain in solitude for the sake of economy.

From the first there were countless experiences such as all capable, energetic women in Mrs. Carlyle's position undergo. At one time Carlyle's stomach disdained the bread supplied by the local baker, and he made bitter complaint over the fact as was his wont. Mrs. Carlyle attempted to bake it herself,

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and after a plucky experiment, now famous, she succeeded. But the honest mind does not consider the act as either unusually noble or evidence of genius, as too plainly she did herself. So it was also when she learned to milk the cow. She did so presumably lest all the possible milkers were all at once taken sick or removed and she were to be left with the un milked cow on her hands. But Carlyle reminds us that there was abundance of labour at hand capable of that service, and at no time was it likely that she was the only milker on the premises. Admittedly, too, she had never learned to darn or sew and had to learn these useful accomplishments. She resented it bitterly.

Her plain duty beyond a doubt was to be a capable housekeeper and affectionate wife—no more, no less. That she was both is equally beyond a doubt. She never complained—to him. She did much worse: she wrote to others. She appealed to posterity, and posterity is judging her.

What Carlyle meant by his remorseful regret that his wife had suffered so at Craigenputtock was not so much that she had had to perform certain duties but that she had been compelled (like himself) to stay there at all. It was very largely an ungrateful grumbling at Fate. When his wife lay dead and he was sated with Fame, when even to have written *Sartor* seemed but a little thing, he was readier to believe that he need never have stayed at Craigenputtock. He was disposed to rail at Fate for forcing him—for making him the man he was! He might have remembered that even then he, not Fate, was the compelling force.



Nor was their life at Craigenputtock so very cheerless. The Carlyles had their riding horses, and their soft, comfortable, easy farmer's "gig" to drive in. Templand, where Mrs. Welsh lived, was only fifteen miles away, so that any day Mrs. Carlyle could visit her mother. Not twice the distance divided Carlyle from *his* mother and *his* clan. Alexander at first was with them. The glorious moors were there, and many a day Carlyle roamed over them speaking out his thoughts to the free wind or the grey Border skies. Half the world lives and dies and never possesses even for a day advantages so many! Did Carlyle never think of the harder fate of so many of the great dead? Of poor Chatterton dying of starvation in his Holborn garret? Of Goldsmith left in pawn to his landlady while Johnson, having first corked the wine bottle, sold the *Vicar of Wakefield* to provide funds for his release? Of Otway and Butler and the torments of hunger? Of Milton, who had been Cromwell's secretary and had had to lie in hiding and poverty in a lowly English village? Of Burns sobbing out his great heart in that dreary town of Dumfries just sixteen miles away? Of Scott, who at that very moment was broken-heartedly walking through an Abbotsford which belonged to creditors? Did he never compare their fate with his own? How dared he to arraign Heaven for its scurvy treatment of himself!

Household expenses being arranged now on the most moderate footing consistent with their social position, the Carlyles had taken every precaution against defeat and were well posted to fight the

bitter contest. Carlyle stood well with the "Reviews" in the beginning at least, and the newly risen author had already made a name for himself. He was kept hard at work, and for the first year or so earned a good deal of money. Whatever he wrote was sure to be accepted, and he always wrote to please himself—that is, when he was inspired with the subject. Lucky for his fame that it was so!

Jeffrey, the powerful Edinburgh editor, as we have said, was his friend and enthusiastic admirer. Froude shows us how very true a friend Jeffrey was. He had been against the Carlyles leaving Edinburgh, and had done all he could to induce Lord Brougham to provide an adequate occupation for him. He put his *Review* practically at Carlyle's disposal and, greatest proof of all of his regard for Carlyle, he actually printed Carlyle's contributions *in extenso* as received! even those he had himself desired to curtail. Carlyle's motto for contributions was the true one—no curtailment or mutilation, but acceptance or rejection *en bloc*. Rows and disputes were certain, for Carlyle was a proud man and had a sufficiently lofty opinion of his own merits. Jeffrey was in sober fact extraordinarily kind. He was content for the most part to waive the "editorial rights" he demanded jealously from every one else. He warned Carlyle, however, that he was forcing Goethe, Schiller, and his Germans down the throat of the public, who were not likely to stand it for long. Events proved Jeffrey right, and indeed he was a very far-seeing editor.

Froude gives the purport of the Carlyle-Jeffrey correspondence, but he does not print the letters,

since, apparently, they were not available. Everything, however, goes to show that it was supremely honourable to both parties. Carlyle was proud and in the right about the insertion of essays as he wrote them unmutilated. Yet had it not been for Jeffrey's friendship it is in every way likely he must have starved. Carlyle was dependent on editors and he was brave, but it was well perhaps he had a Jeffrey to deal with, a courteous, well-mannered gentleman, his friend, instead of a brusque bully and a stranger. Without the friend at court none can hope to succeed. But it is one of the advantages of "peasant" birth that the scion is both brave and obstinate.

Carlyle scarcely appreciated Jeffrey's invaluable friendship as it deserved. Least of all men of genius possibly could Carlyle take good advice. Jeffrey gave good advice when he warned Carlyle he was running "German mysticism" to the death. Froude seems to forget persistently that he is writing after the event, and scarcely tries to call up the contemporary picture.

Jeffrey was right. The British public had no need at that particular moment, any more than at any other moment, that Carlyle should force his "enlightened" views upon its notice. Goethe's reputation presumably did not depend on Carlyle. There is something pathetic, but also vain and unreasonable, something self-important too about Carlyle's passionate insistence that "German mysticism" and nothing else must be published at that moment.

Carlyle, in fact, could write of nothing else. The

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time had not yet come. He had attained to his creed but he had not yet formulated it. He was doing so now, half-consciously and wonderingly, as his journal reveals. *Sartor Resartus* was in the making and occupied his mind. There was always, however, a pressing necessity to earn an income of some sort, and till *Sartor* got itself uttered and thereafter published to the world Carlyle was under the necessity of writing something. Jeffrey was girding at "German mysticism," but Carlyle could possibly have written on a great many more subjects than he suspected, and we have indirectly to thank Jeffrey for diverting that magnificent intellect towards more attractive and national essays.

Almost his first Craigenputtock output was his splendid Essay on Burns. Jeffrey, voicing the opinion of the day, thought it was spoilt a little by its "extravagance" and length. As a review of Lockhart's *Life* indeed the Essay leaves much to be desired and was such as must have caused Lockhart to writhe. The Essay grants scant space to Lockhart, as indeed was Carlyle's deliberate intention. Nowadays most likely the Essay would be returned to the author for correction if the editor knew him, and with brief editorial comment in any event. Length meant more money, and Jeffrey complained of the length; but Carlyle was obdurate, and posterity has been grateful to him ever since. Jeffrey never counted the money; the mean taunt of the low-minded never entered his head.

Carlyle stood firm for a great principle; but the same fight must be waged to-day as in Carlyle's time. The author will find it as hard to maintain the

principle as Carlyle did. This is what, in the graphic slang of the day, is called "passing through the mill," a necessary process until editor, contributor, and review alike find their proper place, become adjusted to circumstances.

Scotland has taken this Essay on Burns to its very heart. It is a brave and a sympathetic masterpiece of criticism which Time has vindicated. Since then the fame of Burns has steadily increased, so that now Carlyle appears a moderate even conservative arbiter where Jeffrey condemned him as "extravagant." But Jeffrey was delighted with the contribution.

So delighted was he that if Carlyle would not come to Edinburgh to see him, Jeffrey resolved to go out to the wilderness at Craigenputtock to seek Carlyle. It was arranged that the Jeffreys should visit the Carlyles in October 1828. Mrs. Carlyle hastened eagerly to get the rooms newly papered and made ready—a task requiring some forethought—and to arrange for an unbroken supply of household necessities. Carlyle scornfully looked on, growling playfully, but alas! in Scots rustic fashion, uttering no gratifying word of praise to the poor little toiler who found it all so hard and him so unsympathetic while she was working for his comfort and dignity. That was the one deep offence he regretted so bitterly and bewailed in such heart-rending language all the later years of his life. There is nothing worse, nothing more—yet what a hubbub of assentient and dissentient critics on that one poor little failing!

Thinking that the Carlyles were probably in need of money, Jeffrey proposed placing his purse at

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Carlyle's disposal for whatever sum he might think needful. It was a kind thought kindly and considerately suggested, but it revealed two things which must have vexed Carlyle to the heart. Jeffrey rested his offer not alone on the noble, the only tolerable, ground that a man with surplus means has a duty to aid a struggling good man, but for a second reason which he admitted was the true one. Mrs. Carlyle, he practically said, was far too delicate for Carlyle's rough handling and rude peasant ways! Carlyle's first duty, according to Jeffrey, was to sacrifice everything for the sake of his wife. He thought Carlyle was deliberately staying at Craigenputtock to please his own obstinacy, and he did not know what Mrs. Carlyle could have told him, but did not, that his stay there was a necessity and that indeed it was but another phase of the old pre-nuptial dispute when he had preferred Hoddam Hill and humble rusticity to London and bankruptcy of mind and soul. Froude's "Greek Chorus" agrees with Jeffrey!

Jeffrey's offer was kindly met, nobly answered and refused. Carlyle says nothing concerning what must have rankled most and acknowledges merely the generous aid proffered him. He told Jeffrey he did not need it at that moment but might gratefully accept on another occasion. As matter of fact he did borrow a sum of a hundred pounds a little later, but one wonders again and again why he or his wife should have preferred to go to Jeffrey rather than to Mrs. Welsh, since that lady held the position of not ungrateful debtor to her own daughter. There is ground for suspicion that Mrs. Carlyle was determined at all costs to prove to her relations that the man she had married

was abundantly able to keep her, a matter on which they like herself had expressed considerable doubt.

But it was altogether wrong of her to keep all inkling of the truth from Jeffrey. Evidently he was quite in the dark as to the true relations of parties. Perhaps he thought Carlyle sat rent free in Craigenputtock, but in any event it was a gross wrong to Carlyle and a serious imputation against his character for Mrs. Carlyle to allow Jeffrey to suppose that he was sacrificing his wife to his ambitions, no matter how loftily he might regard these. Can she really have supposed so?

It was productive of much hardship in the end to Carlyle himself, for Jeffrey began to cool in his admiration. Mrs. Carlyle should have told him honestly that while she was indeed nearly desperate and sick of Craigenputtock, her husband considered that his circumstances did not warrant their living in more expensive Edinburgh or London. Carlyle's journal shows quite clearly that it is a mistake to regard him as ever enamoured of Craigenputtock *per se*. Mrs. Carlyle encouraged Jeffrey to remain under his delusion and she took no steps to lighten her husband's weary load.

On this famous visit of his, Mrs. Jeffrey and at least one daughter accompanied Jeffrey. The servants also came with them, so that the resources of Carlyle's modest establishment must have been strained to the uttermost. Mrs. Carlyle was not unequal to the strain, but Froude's readers must often feel that really this sort of female victory is not so rare as both Froude and Carlyle seem to imagine. Their

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eulogies of Mrs. Carlyle are unstinted, as indeed were her own self-congratulations. "My predecessors had either gone mad or taken to drink," cries she, energetically and characteristically beginning to pat herself vigorously on the back because of it! The wonder is she did not consider it a moral offence for the Welsh lairds or any others to possess such a lairdship! Jean Armour, peasant wife of Robert Burns, did nobler deeds and made greater sacrifices than this lady "born to great prospects," poor Carlyle's wife—poor simply because he was born poor and despised money.

Jeffrey talked seriously to Carlyle and gave him very good advice, which was not, indeed could not be, followed. Jeffrey advised him to leave "German mysticism" alone, and it is to be wished he had done so. For he had abundance of scope even for his intellect in the vast domain of British literature. Jeffrey was not pleased, but meanwhile he yielded with as good grace as he could. A fundamental and serious disagreement had nevertheless originated between Carlyle and himself, and the former was wise to be profoundly uneasy about the future. A struggle was at hand and could not be avoided. All hope lay in the Book, such a book, he thought, as the world had not yet seen. His journal shows that as *Sartor* progressed he realised its greatness. Now and then he was dismayed, sick at heart; but on the whole his predominant mood was that one of Swift when he reread the *Tale of a Tub*: "Good God! what a genius I had when I wrote that book." Carlyle, who was careful of his words, thought it a book of genius, and his wife was equally confident. "My dear, it is



a book of genius," she said, and he never forgot her encouragement.

It was indeed a book of the same marvellous manufacture as the *Tale of a Tub*, proving its author of the breed of Swift and Rabelais and Sterne; but this book had neither the world-shaking laughter nor the filth which had carried Gargantua with a roar across all Europe; it had not the savage irony of the *Tale of the Tub* nor yet the genial sentimentality of *Tristram Shandy*; it was manifestly handicapped. But it was the same immortal product of poetic genius.

In the meantime Jeffrey was too much his friend and too convinced that he had discovered a genius for difficulties between them to become divisive. He was getting the finest essays that had appeared for half a century and was very well content. Not that the essays were appreciated then at their true value. That can never be. Contemporary criticism is always something for posterity to marvel at. It can never have more than glimpses of the truth.

Candidly we of the British stock have cause like Jeffrey to be disappointed that Carlyle devoted so much attention to German literature. Doubtless we have received the gift of criticism, of piercing insight into the genius of Goethe, but we know also the genius of Carlyle and need not be very thankful to wish ardently that Carlyle had found work equally worthy of his intellect in British literature.

Mrs. Carlyle made a pretty "Tam o' Shanter" for Ottilie, Goethe's wife, and sent a lock of her hair to the poet himself. She did her share in strengthening the friendship between the two families and

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nations. Goethe was touched, though the old man, vain to the last, regretted that he no longer possessed the "curls of Jove" to gratify her with a like gift in return. The time had been when he would have responded gladly, perhaps more warmly than Carlyle might have desired! We know from her own prenuptial confessions that she herself had no very warm admiration for Goethe. She had failed to love even the elf-child Mignon; but she knew very well the value to both her husband and herself of Goethe's friendship, expressed as that had been in the most welcome and flattering terms. How the two of them would have sneered, however, at the spectacle of any other two married people thus exploiting or appearing to exploit a Man of Genius for their own behoof. For the Carlyles were not lofty in their estimates of other people, not even of mild John Stuart Mill for one instance, and would have been all the better of meeting people now and then who would have "stood up to them" and hit back.

Irving was now fully embarked on his disastrous voyage into perilous seas. Popularity-hunting and his own vanity were dragging him into dangerous waters. Like the bishop in *Gil Blas* he began to doubt his friends when these strove to correct his tendencies. The brain perhaps was really clouding and his admirers were shocked by the extravagances in which he indulged and on which he laid such stress.

Irving had called at Comely Bank, and "at parting proposed to pray with us, and did, in standing posture, ignoring or conscientiously defying our pretty evident reluctance." "Farewell," he said soon after.

"I must go then and suffer persecution as my fathers have done"! Irving must have been very provoking at times.

One is pained to read these Reminiscences, for poor Irving who had been so good a friend of both though he had mortally wounded the self-respect of one of them, Irving the good man gone wrong is so pitiful a figure, in urgent need of treatment so different from all he was destined to receive. He must have been ignorant of Mrs. Carlyle's real sentiments concerning him. He could not have known how she "despised herself" for having loved him, how she disliked him and yet half envied his wife, else he could not have visited her husband. In what an atmosphere of covert hostility did poor Irving stand! How her tongue would blister his character, till possibly Carlyle told her that she went too far!

"We had to consider ourselves as not a little divorced from him and bidden shift for ourselves." How exquisitely wrong is that way of misrepresenting the truth! A very subtle solvent was surely at work, for when did Carlyle ever consider himself as "thirled" to Irving? Or to any one else that he should be bidden shift for himself? Is it not Irving who is allowed to walk away from the open, well-lit door to wander off into the darkness? You can see Carlyle's face and hers; she has not a pleasant expression when her lip curls in scorn. The figure left to shift for himself is surely that of the mournful Irving whose faith unfaithful was keeping him so falsely true.

He stayed a night with them at Craigenputtock "on greatly improved terms," which most likely

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means that Mrs. Carlyle was rather more genial to him and he did not speak of himself and his alleged mission. The man was getting into deep water, out of his depth, and Mrs. Carlyle must have felt the sadness of it. Shortly afterwards he was to be expelled from the Church of his fathers and to become a byword among the "orthodox who believe in John Knox." The ceremony, mournful as death to him, took place in the old parish kirk of Annan in which he had been baptized. No penalties seem so savage and cruel as ecclesiastical penalties. But now Irving was in bright, helpful mood, and talked much of certain worthies he knew of in London who would soon discover the genius of Carlyle once he came among them!—the "good, simple Irving"!

In the evening Carlyle walked with his guest to Dunscore parish kirk and listened to Irving preaching there; "busy she at home field-marshalling—the noble little soul!" Perhaps. Next day Irving had gone, Carlyle riding as far as Auldgirth bridge with him, the bridge his father had helped to build before Carlyle was born.

They were to meet next in London and to part mournfully, miserably. No truer, sadder and more hopeless friendship than theirs is on record. But Irving is the nobler friend of the two. One feels that a bachelor Carlyle would not have "let go" so easily.

Carlyle was well paid as things go for his literary work, more generously perhaps than any other essayist of like reputation at the moment has been. No sooner did he earn the money than he spent it, not on himself or even on his household always, but

on John also or assisting the clan. John had apparently no intention of subsiding into a "country practitioner" as the easiest and quickest way of becoming independent. He had an ambitious and generous brother who hoped high things from him and for him. Carlyle sent John to study at Munich, to call at Weimar on Goethe while journeying thither, and to equip himself in completest fashion at his brother's expense. Jeffrey knew the amazing man he had to deal with and recognised in a fashion how rare and generous a spirit was that of the much enduring Carlyle.

Froude remarks, always in pursuit of that "great prospects" myth, that Mrs. Carlyle was left much alone while Carlyle worked in the garret of the grey farmhouse; leaving us to infer that had they been in London she could have entertained herself with Society and left Carlyle to shift for himself. Or did he imagine that Carlyle could have behaved any differently anywhere else? It was a lonely life for Mrs. Carlyle, but the life of the childless woman must always be lonely. The fault, however, lay with herself if she was unable to endure a life she had practically forced upon Carlyle in order to set herself right with Mrs. Montagu.

The Carlyles rode together and visited their neighbours. Mrs. Carlyle had a riding pony to begin with at all events, and she rode down to see her mother when the spirit moved her—which was seldom. The Carlyles could take frequent holidays and did take them, travelling about once or twice if not oftener every year. Visitors came and went; principally it must be confessed members of

the clan. Old Mr. Carlyle ventured so far to see the son he was so proud of in his own home. The Welshes as landowners possessed the shooting rights over the little farm estate, and at first Carlyle allowed his Welsh kindred to shoot there to their heart's content. But as was natural he soon grew to hate the shooters with whom he could never have been in any sympathy, and latterly (since the money was important) he let the shootings to a neighbouring proprietor, receiving a welcome ten pounds a year for the privilege.

Meanwhile *Sartor* took shape. The author had begun almost unconscious of his aim; the scheme develops. Carlyle could not satisfy himself. In a fashion the book followed its own course, inevitably. Carlyle had tried many forms as vehicle for the publication of his thought. He had tried verse, but he was trammelled beyond endurance by the rules of versification. Compact of poetry as he was he could not write verse. At that very moment *Wotton Reinfred*, the hapless novel, lay beside him, flung aside in a wise fit of despair. In each attempt, consciously or unconsciously, Carlyle had endeavoured to find an outlet for the thoughts surging within him.

For a time the form the new book should assume baffled him. He avoided the stereotyped forms of his great predecessors Rabelais and Sterne and Swift. At last he hit on the German translation device, the form suggested by his own experience. "Teufelsdröckh" was evolved.

Looking back on that period he always considered it a wonderful period, as happy intrinsically as any he

had ever spent. The happiness was purely literary. Writing with a sense of power and passion and capacity such as he never afterwards revealed in such profusion or had yet experienced, Carlyle felt to the full that joy of authorship, the tingling pleasure of writing something which he realised instinctively would be found worthy to live. The remembrance of it was a bright spot in a sombre memory. So far his had not been a happy life and it was not to be a happy one. Almost justly because of his bitter scorn of domesticity he had been denied children. God was not mocked, not even by Thomas Carlyle.

*Sartor Resartus*,—the name was a blunder and was probably responsible for much of the hard fortune of the book,—even yet it is a hindrance to its popularity,—*Sartor Resartus* is the thought and life-experience, the spiritual autobiography of Thomas Carlyle. The wonderful mind of the man, its evolution, development, and final creed were now made visible, permanent in literature. Had verse succeeded in conveying the same personality, had the novel *Wotton Reinfred* succeeded, *Sartor* had never been written. Carlyle like every man was the puppet of a Superior Power. He was no more conscious to the full of what he was doing than Shakespeare when he wrote *Hamlet*.

By nights he orated to Mrs. Carlyle. She knew and recognised the ring of true genius at once. "My dear, it is a work of genius." Need we wonder that Carlyle never forgot her encouraging words or that he wrote sentences of agonised self-reproach after her death, which misinterpreted as they have most surely

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been have darkened Carlyle's memory for so long? She had a keen intellect. Carlyle had been right there. Her praise was an immense help to him, sustaining and strengthening his failing self-confidence in his hours of weakness. Carlyle owed much to his wife, but this was the greatest service even she ever rendered. In the long night of deepening gloom to come, when one after another threatened to "fall from him" and failure seemed very near and certain, this bright, cheering, and confident voice perhaps won him the victory.

*Sartor* is the perfect autobiography of Carlyle, told as genius alone can tell it, "from within." A lower order altogether, journalistic rather than artistic, is the order of Rousseau. The *Confessions* have not the spiritual insight, the spiritual life, but they possess other qualities. They are exteriors, not interiors.

*Sartor* consequently reveals the mingled Toryism, Radicalism, and Socialism of Carlyle, equally with the creed finally created out of the jumble. Unfortunately Carlyle had discussed the matter with Jeffrey, and he, well-meaning man but essentially guided by Goethe rather than by his own observation, was beginning to fight shy of the dreamer. "You have no creed one half so noble as the duty of supporting your wife as she has been brought up, of rendering her life a happiness to her." How cruel the words were and how bitterly they bit into the heart is manifest in Carlyle's *Reminiscences of Jeffrey*. Froude re-echoes them, so that we know *his* source of information. Jeffrey was merely "putting in a good word" for the wife and intending no harm. He was merely very



insolent, but the poor over-driven Carlyle was a brave man and stood up in self-defence. Pitifully almost he pleads that he cannot help himself, and speaking for his wife (who "silently noble" to him merely complained to everybody else) asserts that poverty does not affright her. No! with the face of a martyr she would welcome it—and did!

At the time we have now reached, 1829-30-31, the country was in an uproar of thought, talk, and action concerning politics and political questions. *Sartor* is the product of the Reform era of 1830-32 and necessarily reflects much of the Liberalism and Radicalism of its time. Literature, publishing, the reading of books and the buying and selling of books passed under a heavy cloud. That fact alone helps us to understand more fairly the mournfully false reception *Sartor* was to receive. Everywhere was unrest. Politicians and statesmen were agitated and uneasy. The Whigs were heading for Reform, all the time aghast at the motley array of Radicals and Socialists behind them. The Tories, like Scott, disliked the Whigs too much to work with them for the reform they acknowledged privately was necessary.

Jeffrey was a Whig, an easy-going Liberal, hostile entirely to Radicalism and violently hating Socialism. At this moment Socialism was attracting much literary attention in France. A clever intellectual group of Socialists of a sort, the St. Simonians, had arisen there and had made themselves conspicuous in the British magazines. Carlyle was showing more than a silent sympathy with the St. Simonians and Jeffrey warned him. Never perhaps very much

inclined to associate himself with the tenets of the Frenchmen Carlyle was proud and not to be threatened. Jeffrey's well-meant advice was resented. Further Carlyle provokingly revealed that he held revolutionary, amazing Radical views concerning politics and the rights of property (so sacred to the Jeffreys), especially concerning the land laws, landlordism, shooting tenants, and so on. Jeffrey told him curtly that if he raised these questions he need expect nothing but humiliation and failure.

"The thinking public," said Jeffrey, will not endure disconcerting theories on that subject. He was right, but forgot that the thinking public of a generation later might have changed not a little perhaps (owing to the teachings of Carlyle and others), and that they might then adopt many of the notions which were now condemned. That indeed is what happened. For the present, however, Jeffrey was right. Personally convinced like any dull honest man of his own easy creed, Jeffrey acted as kindly as his nature allowed. But gradually complaints became more frequent concerning length, treatment, and substance of Carlyle's contributions. Jeffrey was angry. In the end the *Edinburgh Review* like the *Foreign* was practically closed to Carlyle. All hopes were concentrated in the book.

Then a change occurred. At first Whigs and Tories only possessed magazines and Carlyle must have been starved out. But the times produced other magazines, Radical and politico-literary, to provide room for the rival theorists. The *Westminster Review* appeared and the famous *Fraser*, and so on. Carlyle was luckily already well known, and

Charles Buller, his old pupil, was now a Radical candidate of the "utilitarian" school. He could speak for Carlyle among the editors and along with other staunch friends did so. The new Reviews welcomed Carlyle, each sect being desirous to capture so redoubtable an adherent. Alas! in the end he would not be captured, but—marvellous impertinence!—possessed a creed of his own manufacture. Still the Reviews served one purpose of their creation. They kept Carlyle's pot boiling, the money they yielded saved the situation, and they enabled Carlyle to get his articles printed, the articles Jeffrey would no longer accept, and could hardly be expected to accept. These were largely further contributions to "German mysticism."

Meanwhile Mrs. Carlyle's prospect grew worse. Apparently Alexander Carlyle was not satisfied with Craigenputtock, had never been satisfied with it in all probability. He had been willing at his brother's call to take up the farm, but no lease had been entered into. All the Carlyles were shrewd and Alexander was firm enough to offer only what he thought he could make out of the farm. His offer he now saw had been far too high and he was uneasy. If any other was willing to give a higher rent for the farm Alexander would be only too glad to vacate it for him. The arrangement with Alexander had been made really for Carlyle's convenience and was now like to come to an end since a miraculous offerer had actually been discovered who *would* give more for the farm than Alexander could. If Alexander went, strangers would come in his place, and the thought was very disagreeable to Mrs. Carlyle. The two

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houses were in too close proximity. Mrs. Carlyle never forgot that she was a "laird's daughter."

The proposed change was to take place next May and it seriously alarmed her. It decided Carlyle. He must try London to see once more whether existence there was not possible. Everyone said it was not only possible but success there certain. He would try. It is all very well to fight, but when a man is charged with risking his wife in the contest, perhaps endangering her life, the fighting must be conducted with caution. He would prove at least that he was willing to hazard the experiment. *Sartor* was ready, and "*Sartor*, my dear, is a work of genius"!

Mrs. Carlyle was too overjoyed at any near prospect of release to make any objection to his departing alone in the first place. We shall see she was soon on his heels. Meanwhile she had found a servant to her liking. She was willing to do her part (which meant really to make a prolonged holiday somewhere), so Carlyle made ready.

All this time Dr. Carlyle was in Munich, still for the most part living at his brother's expense. He was taking his leisure, looking about for some very fine opening and by no means inclined to be content with mere professional routine. "The Doctor" had leanings to literature and perhaps had some "facility" for it (as the awful phrase runs), but Carlyle dissuaded him as he always did. He knew too bitterly what even genius had to put up with and how near to starvation it must often be. He had some right to press his own views on John and did so—to John's eventual great content. In Edinburgh a young man,

Dr. Hutchison Stirling, was to ask a like question as to the advisability of pursuing literature and to receive the like wise advice. Nor did he regret it, for he lived to write the *Secret of Hegel* all the same. Could any man have earned an income (outside a professorial chair) writing secrets of Hegel?

Dr. John Carlyle was not left to fight the forlorn fight of his great brother; but he too was now over thirty and had made small visible progress in the world. He could not yet maintain himself by his own exertions. Carlyle set to work to find some appointment for him. From Craigenputtock he and his wife dispatched letters to Jeffrey, Mrs. Montagu, and perhaps others, asking their assistance and influence in procuring some post suitable for the expectant and well-equipped John. Powerful influence was brought to bear, the most influential being that of Jeffrey himself when he became Lord Advocate, an event which was to come to pass almost immediately. Carlyle was himself too hard pressed for money to be able to help John further at this time, and John seems to have applied to Jeffrey without his brother's knowledge. Carlyle was rightly very much annoyed but gave in with what grace he could, probably recognising John's invidious position without funds. The debt like all the debts of these brothers was repaid at the very first opportunity. Truly Providence was humbling Carlyle for his own good.

Jeffrey's kindness was unrelenting. He found John far easier to help than his brother, probably because he knew better what he wanted. John wanted the practical sinecure, the snug appointment, Carlyle had disdained to ask for himself. Carlyle himself would

accept neither post nor pension nor honour and the world applauds, but we have only had the one Carlyle. He also rejoiced, however, to see his brother accept the "easy" appointment, just as later he was one of the prime movers in procuring a pension for Alfred Tennyson. He was stern to himself alone.

Jeffrey at length discovered an Irish lady, a Lady Clare, wealthy enough to afford a physician "all to herself," and willingly he proposed Dr. John Carlyle to her. The recommendation procured him the post. John was soon established in it and on the way to Italy. Since the "Doctor" had no further changes in the period of which we treat we may as well dismiss him from these pages. He serves as a foil to his more illustrious relative, this brother of Thomas Carlyle, clever, genial man of the world. He had distinct literary ability of which almost the sole evidence remaining is the very literal but thorough and adequate prose translation of Dante's *Inferno*. He seems to have penetrated no farther than this lowest circle, or perhaps adjudged that in the *Inferno* he had already the finest portion of Dante's Divine Song. Dr. Carlyle married later and settled in private practice. Finally, a widower like his brother, he retired to Dumfries in his old age, at one time hazarding the experiment of trying to live with Thomas in Chelsea—an experiment which ended as it was almost bound to do in failure. In the end he predeceased his brother. When he died Thomas Carlyle was a very lonely old man, none lonelier then living.

A man less brave than Carlyle might have been

overwhelmed by his financial position at this time. Since their entry on Craigenputtock Alexander Carlyle (which means Thomas Carlyle) had lost upwards of £300. So far from the farm proving an aid to literature, as Carlyle had hoped, Craigenputtock at least had shown that literature was the one thing standing between farming and bankruptcy. Did ever literary man do so much with his money as Thomas Carlyle? But was ever literary man as well paid to begin with so as to be able to do it?

Just before proceeding to London Carlyle published his *Signs of the Times*, his opinion or outlook on the welter of political facts round him. Macaulay sneered at it, says Froude, but recognised its force. Froude, however, is a Carlylean and moreover was wrong in his estimate of Carlyle as a politician. For statesmanship or politics Carlyle had no genius whatever. The statesman must deal with facts as they are. What is of value and importance to the world is that Carlyle first observed and impressed on the world the one necessity for all government, the obvious and therefore overlooked necessity of Wisdom. Carlyle had no theories of government, and one government was as good to him as another so long as it was wise and strong. Democracy, Republic, Monarchy, either or neither or any, but Wisdom necessarily in the Ruler whoever he be. Froude following his own predilections always writes as though Carlyle precludes Democracy. Certainly he did not love it. But if a Democracy be the wisest? The unwisdom of democracy in America and much more in his own England prejudiced him against that special form. Yet all his denunciations, prophecies,

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and warnings, as though the Almighty were speaking, have proved futile. Prophecies of disaster have a fair chance, however, of proving true some time and eventually!

Had Froude observed more narrowly he would have noticed that Carlyle was prophesying in like doleful fashion in 1820 and that his father had always been prophesying before him. From Carlyle's birth till his death there was as matter of fact a steady advance in human comfort and prosperity. The circumstances of old James Carlyle were harder, gloomier, and less encouraging than the circumstances of such a man would be to-day. So much easier is the common lot to-day that Carlyle actually supposed it so facile that Scotland could no longer hope to breed men of the old type! Another fallacy! Hundreds of years ago men were saying the same thing.

In June 1831 Death inflicted his first keen blow on Carlyle. Carlyle was now thirty-six and yet had never save as a very young boy really known the terrible experience of human loss. A favourite sister, Margaret, died at this time, a victim apparently to consumption or some rapidly wasting disease. Her death made an extraordinary impression on Carlyle's sensitive nature. The journal amazes us by the depth of love and feeling displayed in connection with this sister whom he had seen so little of, but who had come to them at Craigenputtock for the purity of the air. The Carlyles were clannish and apparently simple goodness ranked equally with intellect, which is not always the case.

*Sartor* was packed by his wife and Carlyle's



luggage dispatched to Annan *en route* for London. Carlyle and Alexander drove down to the little country town where at the quay he embarked for Whitehaven on the Cumberland coast as the custom was, transshipping there for Liverpool. They started at 2 in the morning of the 4th of August 1831. Mrs. Carlyle stayed behind meanwhile, full of the same proud, anxious thoughts as Carlyle himself. Fame?

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A LONDON INTERLUDE OF SIX MONTHS

MRS. CARLYLE was ever the best literary agent her husband could have desired, and he owed her a debt in this respect which he never recognised till the time for gratitude was past. Her weapons were the most legitimate: her woman's wit and her fresh and youthful vivacity. In anticipation of Carlyle's visit, she had carefully sent Jeffrey her photograph, stretching as far as she was able the convenient theory of relationship of which Froude makes so much. We are never told exactly to what degree of kinship it extended, and it is not unfair to surmise that it may have been no nearer than the forty-second. When Carlyle called on the great man, at any rate, Jeffrey was able to show him the portrait of his wife which had arrived from Craigenputtock, and her bright face smiled a welcome to him. He wrote her very tenderly and gratefully: "I could have grat," he says: I could have wept to think of you and the lonely moors.

Carlyle himself, however, was hardly so heedless as one has been led to believe of the more worldly methods by which a man succeeds. He was never perhaps in reality the haughty and arrogant scorner of *les convenances* he somewhat affected in late life,

though in all truth he approached near enough. No sooner, at least, had he arrived in London and procured rooms for himself (with Irving's brother, as it chanced, where John also had lived) than we find him hard at work attending to the business in hand and, as we see, visiting Jeffrey, the man best able to be of assistance. He found his good friend now one step higher up the scale of ascension, Lord Advocate of Scotland to wit. Jeffrey was disposed to be just a little more patronising in his manner, or Carlyle supposed so. But to all appearance he was as kind and as willing to be helpful as ever. The truth may have been that the smug, contented look of the august dispenser of patronage was now more frequently to be seen on Jeffrey's innocent-looking, clever countenance, and Carlyle was quick to detect it. He always felt sore under patronage of any description, and in this case surely if in any such was the irony of God.

On Jeffrey's side, doubtless, the old thought recurred. If Carlyle would only be reasonable and become a Whig! Had he done so, eschewed the *Westminster* and more dubious periodicals, purged and lived cleanly like a Whig—why, Jeffrey might eventually have given Carlyle some insignificant appointment or inferior clerkship worth not more than £200 a year, such as his own clerk would have disdained as beneath his abilities! There need be little doubt Jeffrey would have ventured so far. All honour to our great British statesmen for their patronage of genius and their just apprehensions of its claims.

On one point, however, the dispenser of patronage

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would admit of no misapprehension. Carlyle must become a Whig. The game was hopeless (for Jeffrey) from the beginning, for, curiously, Carlyle did not desire money, or rise in status or success as the world regards it, while he did very much desire fame as an honest and sincere man. The two of them fell to talking as usual over Carlyle's prospects, and with increasing hopelessness on Jeffrey's part. Naturally *Sartor* was the first consideration of Carlyle, whose great desire at that moment was to find a publisher for this book of genius. He had come to Jeffrey to take counsel as to the one most likely and for the Lord Advocate's introduction. It was somewhat remarkable perhaps under the circumstances that Jeffrey should suggest Murray, who was credited with Tory proclivities; but he had not at the moment read the book, as it is to be feared he never did find much opportunity to read it. What he did read apparently gave him abundant cause for thought. "Hopeless" was the evident but suppressed verdict of the great Jeffrey. "This will never do!"

Murray had been Byron's publisher, and Carlyle was delighted with the brief letter of introduction which eventually after much circumspection was forthcoming. He carried it hopefully away. It would appear, however, that some other publisher was also in Carlyle's mind and was consulted in a fashion before Murray, for the position finally taken up by that gentleman was the "business-like" one that he ought to have been informed of the fact. The goods, it seems, were tainted by at least one refusal, and Murray was more than shy. The end

of the matter was that Carlyle, indignant that his good faith should be called in question, wrote an angry letter withdrawing the manuscript altogether. So ended the only chance the unfortunate *Sartor* ever possessed of adequate publication in its own era.

It was a most disheartening business, and undoubtedly Carlyle's own high temper led him into it. He was to find, to his deep indignation, that no one would look at *Sartor* with a view to publishing it at his own risk. Carlyle was the "bravest of the brave," but he passed through no experience more trying to his courage than this. The end seemed to have been written already—Failure. He knew what his wife thought. Goethe was with him, but he had done all he could. There remained but his own proud heart and his own conviction, the logic-defying conviction of genius, a belief he dare not avow without the risk of ridicule and contempt. That is possibly the hardest part for the man of genius—to have so grand a belief in himself in face of the clearest evidences to the contrary in the circumstances by which he is surrounded.

In the exquisite little addendum which Carlyle appended for all time to *Sartor*, the "publisher's reader" has found himself impaled. Froude regards the act as "pardonable malice" on Carlyle's part, but there is no malice about it. It is rather a salutary warning to the possessors of genius not to expect to find a publisher easily for a book of genius. The criticism of the book given there is precisely the sort of criticism such a book would obtain to-day. *Sartor* was an impossible book for its own era. It

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had to wait another generation who could not fail to understand it.

Even now Carlyle was not dismayed. He tried other publishers, but received always the answer in the negative. He enlarged his experiences of these gentlemen, and found that there were many extraordinary ways of getting books published. One proposed to print and publish *Sartor* if Carlyle would give him £150 for doing so! It is understood many books are published on terms like these, but Carlyle was too wise to think fame worth the name could be acquired on such terms. Dependent entirely on his pen, Carlyle would have liked to receive "money down," but offered to share all risk with his publisher—in vain. He persevered, and friends were more sympathetic than he afterwards acknowledged; but no one would have anything to do with the dubious volume which poor Carlyle carried round the market. The literary world of London welcomed Carlyle, but no one who looked into *Sartor* seems to have been very much surprised at its failure to find a publisher. Manifestly, for one thing, the cumbrous title was against it, glaring proof of Carlyle's defective ear for the melody of words and letters. The hissing "s's" are probably one superficial cause of the instinctive popular dislike to it.

Nor was the time favourable. People were not buying books nor reading them in that 1832 Reform Bill hubbub. Too much prejudice had been aroused. The unfortunate Carlyle seemed to have everything against him. The experience was one of the worst he was ever called upon to endure. Victory seemed

farther off than ever, and it had appeared so near at Craigenputtock. To his despairing eyes it seemed now at an infinite distance and failure staring him in the face. Carlyle was now in his thirty-seventh year, the year Burns had died in, his great work finished.

*Sartor* went back to the bag, there to lie till some arrangement might be effected for its publication. Carlyle had other work in London to attend to, and he must be writing to meet his daily expenses as well as the cost of his household in Scotland. He continued writing the essays, and fortunately found the new magazines disposed to welcome him. In London he had excellent libraries at his command, a point on which Carlyle was always particular, to which we now owe the "London" Library, founded at his instigation. For the rest, he discussed contributions with editors, called on old friends, made new ones, and was introduced to the rising powers.

Charles Buller was especially helpful, and through him principally Carlyle was attracted to the new *Westminster*. Through Buller also he made the acquaintance of John Stuart Mill, the most brilliant of the rising "utilitarian" school, with which in after years Carlyle was to find himself so often at feud. In politics Mill was an ultra-Radical and almost inevitably bitterly opposed to many of Carlyle's favourite tenets, but the two conceived a mutual admiration for each other. They were attracted in spite of the grave differences. While it lasted their friendship was amiable, kindly, even familiar, but, like most of Carlyle's early friendships,

it did not stand the excruciating test of time. In the end it became an armed neutrality, threatening always to lapse into an active hostility. The *Latter-Day Pamphlets* fanned discord to an angry flame. The differences between the two men were deep and vital, and the wonder is not so much that there should often have been a strained relationship between them as that their friendship should have lasted so long and well.

Carlyle found plenty friends in London during this second visit of six months. In spite of the attempted praying at Comely Bank, Irving had always, as we have seen, remained Carlyle's true friend. He was steadily moving towards pentecostal or prophesying manifestations and finding more and more to be said for the spirit of prophecy as a living and continuing principle in the Church, if believing folk could be found with sufficient faith to realise it. Carlyle kept up the old friendship though he was not now living in Irving's house. Indeed he avoided Irving's house because of the company to be found there. The fashionable admirers now left Irving severely alone, but unfortunately their place had been taken by more objectionable enthusiasts of the lower strata. Irving was still full of hopeful but absurd schemes for furthering Carlyle's interests. The relation between the men had changed indeed, but neither perceived it. It was not in Irving's power now to do much for Carlyle. He introduced him to all he could, but they were mostly "cranks" or "Millenniumists," or decent, prosaic members of the Kirk.

Carlyle wrote home to the anxious wife long



letters descriptive of his daily existence and doings, as he never forgot to do all his life. His incessant correspondence is amazing. These letters are sincere, affording a vivid picture of his day, very affecting often for the deep affection they reveal. The poor man always thought he was doing so badly in providing a substitute for the "great prospects" his wife had been brought up to. Nor does she ever complain to him. That is the worst of it. The two loved each other deeply, but the one nursed a spirit of resentment for an imagined *mésalliance*, while the other was not aware that she persistently did so. There can be no doubt of Carlyle's great love for his wife. All his letters go to prove it. It is a mistake to imagine that he did not discover the fact till she lay dead. After her death what he did discover was what he had been pathetically ignorant of, that she had felt so keenly from the social point of view the poverty (such as it was) and the unavoidable economical shifts to which her marriage had reduced her. Nor must we ever forget his own mental habit of exaggeration. That ingrained literary "vice" of his is the foundation of a great deal of misunderstanding.

Mrs. Carlyle always seems to be saying, Ah! yes, my husband is the noblest of men, a great genius and a kind, industrious husband; but—hush! a peasant, while I—well, I was not born to this. Carlyle never treated his mother like a peasant, and it is not likely he could treat his wife like one, any more than it is likely she would have allowed herself to be regarded as such by any one, least of all Carlyle. Froude, the well-meaning and honest biographer, but unfortunately

fascinated by the lady herself, gravely expands all this into an elaborate theory which has unfairly hurt his reputation, just as though he had been deliberately Carlyle's enemy—an absurd charge to make against Froude of all men. And it has injured Carlyle's own reputation, so that it might almost be said a curse has been laid over the entire business.

In all the straits for money is it not at least peculiar that Mrs. Carlyle never asked her own mother for the aid she was morally and legally entitled to demand? The iron had eaten into her soul, and popular criticism at the time of her marriage seems to have done the same thing. Carlyle must prove he could keep her with assistance from none. She granted him no respite.

At such a time as this, however, when her husband was in London and had been disappointed, Mrs. Carlyle was proving herself the best friend he had in the world and indeed almost the only one. From Scotland now came warm, affectionate letters which did a world of good to the despondent man who read them. She encouraged him bravely. She had married him, she believed in him, and together, she told him, they must succeed. She had plenty of spirit and a courageous heart. So, in spite of all his rebuffs, there is reason to think Carlyle enjoyed himself very well, and he went about with a lighter heart after each letter received. He met the literary "lions," the men of celebrity, *alors celebres*, and heartily despised their buckram armour. He met all the "new men" who had come to the front since his last visit among them.

Carlyle's *Reminiscences* and Froude's own too-

vivid recollection of all an old man's weariness and satiety, have been responsible for much of the world's misunderstanding of Carlyle. One must try to recreate the atmosphere and the circumstances of the time. Carlyle was not old in 1831. If he scorned Southey, we know he did not show it, and probably Southey never knew it. At the time he looked up to and admired Southey civilly. Coleridge perhaps was fair game, and every one professed to pity poor "opium" Coleridge. But Carlyle was very keen to be introduced to him. Lamb he saw little of, and probably Carlyle would never have uttered his hard judgments had it not been for the meeting a month or two later after his wife had joined him. Apparently he wrote what he did under the stimulus of his wife's keen resentment, who would appear to have had a chance encounter with the "Cockney" wit. Probably Lamb ventured a playful, half-deliberate cut at the Scottish intellect with which he was in "imperfect sympathy," and Mrs. Carlyle may have countered rather more conclusively than the English jester relished. There may have been something more. But we need wonder little that Carlyle, in the disheartening state of his circumstances, should have cast a contemptuous eye even on the gentle Elia. Things had gone very prosperously with that gentleman, and doubtless Lamb showed scant respect to the two lonely Calvinistic folk from Scotland. Perhaps like Carlyle Lamb was engrossed in himself or even tried to snub the solemn strangers. It is a pity, but the world must consider facts as they appeared to contemporaries. When he was safely, as he thought, high up in the "tree," Lamb may

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have disliked intensely to hear this well-read, scornful, and contemptuous Scotsman denounce the tree and all its fruits. Not unnaturally, the two natures jarred.

Carlyle was young and very confident. He was abundantly sure of his ability to hold his own with any "lion" they might bring against him. But it would be a great mistake to imagine that Carlyle openly showed that to them or created friction. He kept his own counsel and he was not unpopular. Not one of them in Carlyle's opinion was a man of genius or a great man or worth much attention. They, on the other hand, seem to have recognised at least that an earnest believer and a very brilliant speaker had come among them in Thomas Carlyle. His talk had a marvellous fulness and sparkled with humour. Carlyle was taken out to his heart's content. Few men with prospects so dubious find so good a reception. For all he had ever done, and brilliant contributor though Carlyle was, no man ever more speedily gained influential friends and admirers. And these proved far more ungrudging in friendship to him than he to them.

Almost every one he met in London seems to have disappointed him, the truth being that Carlyle was really engrossed with himself and his mission was now not dimly dawning. He was less catholic than they, with an intensity from which they shrank. At times there was literally no pleasing Carlyle. For example, he meets Godwin of Shelley fame, and describes the meeting as "the most unutterable stupidity ever enacted on this earth." Well might he confess his damning tendency to exaggeration.

For Carlyle, after all, was not too exigent in his requirements. He mentions somewhere concerning a young Advocate he met in Craigcrook, Jeffrey's fine Edinburgh residence, that he was the wittiest, cleverest, and most entertaining mimic he could remember, and mimicry is not a lofty fashion of entertainment! By nature Carlyle was fond of society and well fitted to shine there, as indeed in later years he proved when he went out a great deal.

John was home from Munich and had not yet taken up the travelling appointment. The two brothers went one day to the House of Lords, where Carlyle saw the great Lord Chancellor sitting on the Wool-sack. He regarded Brougham with varied emotions, for the most part resentful, and not unmindful of his conduct in the matter of the London University Chair. Carlyle never forgot. Doubtless Brougham's hairy-sunk eyes took note of Carlyle also, if he knew him by sight; for Brougham was observant, an able man, and an attentive reader of the magazines.

Another little incident of the visit reveals that these days were not so very different from our own in important respects. Macvey Napier, an "Able Editor" of the day and Carlyle's good friend, discussed with him the tendencies of the time as literary men are fond of doing. It is interesting to learn that in their opinion the public of their generation was "froth-fed," without taste for solid nutriment. They might have been talking of to-day. Men have always talked so. Perhaps Napier wanted to console Carlyle, or there may have been a mutual wish to condole with each other. They agreed that Gibbon would not then have found seven hundred and fifty

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subscribers for his *Decline and Fall*. But each age has its own tasks, which are possible at no other epoch. One knows he would be no more successful to-day. Would Milton be likely to find any publisher in the whole range of London to take *Paradise Lost* off his hands, let alone give him £10 for it? "My patrons are the booksellers," said the inimitable Goldsmith proudly. Possibly that was why the wise old Johnson found occasion to query on Goldsmith's death, "Was ever poet so trusted before?" With such patrons a poet perhaps had need of trust. But there can be no "patrons" for literature.

We may not pass over a pathetic little letter which Carlyle wrote at this time to his wife in Scotland, a fervent prayer for her aid as the one who loved and understood him, which, alas! she could not grant, because indeed her understanding was to seek. "But oh! my dear Jeannie," wrote Carlyle, after indulgence in some of his more Swiftian diatribes and half-conscious of the sin which so easily beset him, "do help me to be a little softer, to be a little merciful to all men, even gigmen." His appeal is the more pathetic because Carlyle stood in such need of human charity and judged others so harshly. There was the direst necessity for her help, but she had none to give. He never seems to have recognised that her nature was far harder than his own. She was prone to jeer where Carlyle honestly despised. Far from helping him to a more kindly and merciful habit of thought, Mrs. Carlyle's influence was steadily and persistently directed towards rendering him more scornful and less tolerant.

It is said she desired children. It is hard to believe it when one remembers her contempt for Irving's domesticity and her gibes against marriage. Jane Welsh was a lonely woman whose fate it was to come under the controlling influence of a man who left her loneliness undiminished. She had little happiness in her life, and her husband's creed placed far too little importance on the smaller things of existence, the most vital to the wife. But in her unmarried years she had been no happier, before she met Carlyle at all. She was always the "mocking-bird" Professor Nichol thinks is so excellent a description of her. Had she not been sick to death of Haddington before her marriage?

By the month of September 1831 Carlyle had not been gone four weeks and Mrs. Carlyle had become intolerably bored with the loneliness. Her husband's letters made her anxious, while Alexander's absence from the farm would now first make itself felt acutely. She had now no male relative within call. The reader will have observed that neither of these two preachers of endurance, the scornful Carlyles, were disposed to endure patiently their own crosses. But there is this to be said for the lady at this time: she was in bad health. Mrs. Carlyle had always longed to be in London, and probably had intended from the first to join Carlyle as quickly as possible. She had an invincible belief that Carlyle needed only to appear in London to receive recognition, and she could not understand any hitch except through the absence of her keen advice and assistance. She made up her mind to follow, travelling by the same Whitehaven-Liverpool route. In Liverpool lived an

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uncle, the relative perhaps of whom Mrs. Carlyle was fondest, and she intended to visit him on the way. This was probably her first visit to London, because as matter of fact the "great prospects" had not included travelling, and Carlyle, the son of the "peasant," had seen far more of the world while he had actually mixed in far better society than Jane Welsh.

Froude tells us, feelingly as always when describing Mrs. Carlyle's sufferings, that she arrived shattered by the journey between Liverpool and London, with abundance of luggage, in the way of porridge-meal for Carlyle and the rest of the country produce which the Carlyles seem to have carted about with them always. One cannot see that Mrs. Carlyle can have suffered from anything very much worse than the worry of looking after all this bundle of boxes and bags. Nor is it easy to see how that could have been avoided. Coach journeys are comfortable for no one under such conditions. When she arrived, somewhat to Carlyle's glad surprise, they took lodgings in Ampton Street, near Gray's Inn Road.

Here Mrs. Carlyle at once set up her salon, and proved to her delighted husband how correctly she had gauged her own possibilities. Naturally Carlyle's abode was more attractive when a clever and witty young lady was added to the attractions of his own monologue. There can be little doubt his wife's presence did help Carlyle in a multitude of ways besides lending him encouragement by her proximity. Incidentally Carlyle came to attach more and more value to his wife's abilities, and it seemed even to himself more and more pitiful that circumstances



should confine her to Craigenputtock. Every friend aided and abetted the wife in that respect, till one would almost fancy Carlyle were regarded by them all as some cruel ogre determined to carry off the Princess to his gloomy castle in the forest. He must have smiled at much he heard on that subject. Return to Craigenputtock? He had no wish to do so. He would very gladly have remained in London, but he could point with unspoken question to *Sartor* lying in his bag. If London meant no better than this for his very best effort, how could he live there? Craigenputtock indeed had served its purpose, and Carlyle would be relieved beyond words to get out of it as soon as might be.

All the same, they were by no means done yet with Craigenputtock. Meanwhile Carlyle was intensely glad to have his wife beside him, though he never gauged correctly his wife's capacity for enjoyment or her eagerness to gratify her own "literary" notions, to shine for example in conversation in the "salon." The two Carlyles threw themselves into an existence which was now positively brilliant by reason of its contrast with the silent life on the moors.

It is at this time Carlyle first consciously seems to have put himself before the world as a "seer," a denouncer of the shams and insincerities of his generation, a prophet and a somewhat despairing critic of his time. He would talk and denounce and explain his own creed. "Dost thou believe it then?" he questions himself in his journal. "Then is the new era begun." And even so it was, though *Sartor* was not yet published, and lay discarded and rejected in

among the Scots coterie, such as Lockhart and Hogg, Galt and Allan Cunningham, by whom he was at first eagerly welcomed but whose welcome he hardly appreciated at its true worth.

It was while husband and wife were living in Ampton Street that Death delivered his second and this time nearer stroke at Carlyle. News arrived of the sudden death of James Carlyle his father, and the blow went home shrewdly. His wife was a sympathetic comforter by his side, but his *Reminiscence of James Carlyle*, written amid the sorrow of this time, reveals the perturbation of soul and the deep and loving admiration Carlyle entertained all his life for his "peasant" father, his stern but victorious parent. He remarks justly that his father was the rock on which himself stood, now submerged as he would one day be sunk. No finer tribute has ever been offered a parent. It is a magnificent death-chant and one well earned, not undeserved. James Carlyle had been a hard man but a generous father, wonderfully affectionate to his own family, a man of clear capable outlook who had accomplished his appointed task in rearing that family to such a height, laying surely the foundations on which his great son built so grandly and so well.

Carlyle was always religious, sterner than most men and solemn in habitual thought. But now and afterwards his thinking and writing, even his letters, assume a deeper and graver tone. He is possessed by a grave sense of responsibility. The effect of his father's death is most noticeable in the letters. The correspondence reveals how compellingly, seriously,

and responsibly Carlyle took his dead father's place as head of the house towards his mother and his younger brothers and sisters. Confidently even in the gloom of his own non-success he bids them look to him now. Few sons have more worthily filled a father's place. Immediately all his own work is flung aside, and for weeks Carlyle must have devoted himself to writing long and affectionate letters of condolence and assurance of affection to his relations. With Carlyle the call of the clan is instant and imperative. Yet surely never was clan chief so lamented and bewailed as James Carlyle.

The death may have decided Carlyle. His prospects were not reassuring, while the visit to London in search of a publisher for *Sartor* he must now confess had been in vain. Carlyle was driven back on his old resolution. He was compelled to return to Craigenputtock whether he liked it or not. He would very gladly have remained in London had that been feasible, but he let it be known that departure meant *au revoir* rather than farewell. To Mrs. Carlyle the resolution was very dreadful, but she knew all too well in her own disconsolate heart that her husband was right. They must bow to necessity. She was not robust and Carlyle (doubtless very provokingly) took it into his head that she was unconsciously pining like himself for her native air! Carlyle must have been very trying to her scornful, downright nature at such moments.

The Carlyles returned in company by the same route each had travelled in coming. They rested for a week with the Liverpool relatives of Mrs. Carlyle. When they reached Scotsbrig, the bereaved home of

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the poor old mother, Carlyle heard of the death of Goethe. It must have been as though the last star had been extinguished in the sky. The news added the lowest depth of gloom to his loneliness and dissatisfaction. Carlyle drew very near despair.

## CHAPTER XIX

CRAIGENPUTTOCK AGAIN—MARCH 1832 . . . APRIL  
1834—VISIT OF EMERSON

ONCE more in her own house, Mrs. Carlyle took up her dreary task with renewed determination to make the best of the uninviting prospect before her husband and herself. The house was papered, cleaned, and painted anew. If her temper was uncertain and her hopes at their lowest, we are bound to confess that she was loyal and eager to do her duty. In connection with the house-cleaning that now became necessary Froude affords us a significant glimpse into the source of his unfortunate misunderstanding of the circumstances. Carlyle when writing to his mother to tell her all that is going on at Craigenputtock mentions incidentally that "Jane is now far happier since she found work to do," that is to say, since she came to understand her duty as housekeeper and had found solace for regret in its fulfilment. It is the common experience, yet Froude appends a footnote to this chance remark of Carlyle. "A mistake on Carlyle's part. Mrs. Carlyle had not strength for household work. She did it; but it permanently broke down her health."

Froude must, however, have seen and read a famous letter of Mrs. Carlyle wherein that lady

exultantly tells her correspondent how dreary and desperate her monotonous existence at Craigenputtock had been, till she put to herself her husband's exemplary maxim, "Do the duty that lies nearest." Not till then had life been tolerable. Her duty plainly was to be a good housewife and among other things special to their circumstances in a lonely farmhouse she had to bake bread, since that provided by the bakers was beyond her husband's digestive capacity. She tells her friend that she turned resolutely to her house duties and solved the problem of her life, found something at last to make life worth living, saved her soul in fact.

Carlyle's contemporary letter therefore makes no mistake. He is telling the real truth and exactly what his wife had informed him. Nevertheless Froude has ample excuse, for a hundred other letters and incidents prove that Mrs. Carlyle frequently in martyr fashion of the misunderstood uttered sentiments similar to those of Froude. The biographer indeed is but calling up his reminiscences and his recollections of Mrs. Carlyle's drawing-room conversations. The lady meant no falsehood yet her tone is the tone of blame, and the blame could only fall on Carlyle. She honestly believed apparently that her marriage had proved the death-blow to all the great prospects her father had designed for her. Whereas the truth was that the prospects had vanished long before she met Carlyle. She forgot conveniently that her marriage had been due to her own impulsiveness and to her having compromised herself, no matter how innocently, with Irving.

It may be added that Mrs. Carlyle's household duties were not such, and it was solely her own de-

liberate doing if they ever became such as to prove beyond her strength. Carlyle no more than another required his wife to be a charwoman. The root cause of it all lay rather in her own pride, the sheer perversity of her insistence on their utter independence of all outside aid. She would not confess frankly her physical incapacity for the post she had practically forced upon the willing Carlyle, for that would have been to acknowledge that she ought not to have burdened a heavily weighted man with her society. Plainly Mrs. Carlyle was determined at all costs to allow no relative of either of them the least chance of saying such a thing. But why, oh! why did she hint that Carlyle was to blame? Of all the parties he could least be blamed.

Mrs. Carlyle resumed her correspondence with the Lord Advocate which continued in desultory fashion till some time after the fall of the Whigs from power, much to their own amazement. The Whigs had imagined the nation owed them a perpetual debt and took their defeat sorely. Thereafter Jeffrey ceased to be Lord Advocate and had more leisure at the disposal of his friends. Froude who had read the letters between the two seems to indicate that on his side Jeffrey pretty evidently was constant in condoling with the wife of Carlyle on her prolonged exile "in the desert," she who might be leading a salon of her own! Mrs. Carlyle apparently was sending him her literary efforts, it does not appear whether for publication or not. The more one strives to realise Carlyle's actual position the more does one sympathise with Carlyle's dislike to this interference of Jeffrey in his private affairs.

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Mrs. Carlyle may have written at this time the verses which she entitled "Lines to a Swallow building under our eaves." These she sent to Jeffrey, and one wonders if she showed them to her husband before she did so. They were published later and may be found in the pages of Froude. The last verse is probably all the foundation there ever was for the astounding statement that this lady who ardently desired literary fame and married Carlyle for ambition had a passion for motherhood.

"God speed thee, pretty bird ; may thy small nest  
With little ones, all in good time, be blest,  
I love thee much ;  
For well thou managest that life of thine,  
While I ! Oh ! ask not what I do with mine,  
Would I were such !"

The cry is from the very depths, but it is not the cry for children. Nor can we forget that she had applauded Carlyle's bachelor scoffings at the domestic Irving and "his little brat."

The cholera broke out in Carlisle, and the lonely pair at Craigenputtock were possibly the envy of half Britain, so great was the terror inspired. Both husband and wife were too strong-minded and sensible to suffer alarm, or to think death any nearer at such a moment than at any other. The dreaded plague crept over the South of Scotland, however, and entered Dumfries, where the death-roll was a heavy one, tradition of which still lingers as witness to an ineffaceable impression.

In spite of their safety from the cholera, the condition of Mrs. Carlyle's health was far from satisfactory. She drooped in spirits and pined for



company, and one ought really to have compassion on Carlyle in his cruel circumstances, for the situation was now a most trying and difficult one for him, with Jeffrey and others hinting what they did. In their view he was sacrificing his wife to his own obstinacy. But Carlyle was helpless to save her with all the will in the world to be of help. He did not like Craigenputtock any more than she did, but he was devoted to his work and the conditions had produced *Sartor*. The discipline he converted into a salutary influence while the fresh air and rustic food suited best his indifferent digestion. Above all, living was cheap at Craigenputtock now that he had no longer responsibility for the farm. That had gone with Alexander. Carlyle stayed at Craigenputtock not because he wished to stay there (as matter of fact he was growing to hate it) but because he calculated that he could not earn enough to support himself and wife in London. All the trouble lay there. The "obstinacy" was nothing else than Scots caution, the fear of debt and the desire to cut his coat according to his cloth. Remembering the ante-nuptial taunts about the "inequality of our births," Carlyle was determined he would himself support by his own earnings all the expenses his marriage entailed. To Carlyle his wife made no complaint, but she agreed with Jeffrey, and she wrote heart-broken verses which probably her husband never even saw. Curiously too, as Carlyle's increasing fame brought grander prospects than she had ever dreamed of, his wife resented the more the circumstances under which alone these had been added unto her, the drawbacks inseparable from the man himself!

It was not fair, nor was Carlyle in the least to blame.

The mischief went further. Jeffrey honestly supposed that Carlyle's own obstinacy kept him at Craigenputtock since the man would not borrow any money and said he needed none. He was disposed to lecture Carlyle on the subject, as we know. Mrs. Carlyle apparently sided with her husband, but she was writing all the time to Jeffrey in the same old discontented tone. Carlyle seldom wrote to Jeffrey now, for there was little left on which they could correspond with advantage. In his secret heart Jeffrey may have become a little wearied with the restless intellect he had roused, but he still avowed himself friendly to Carlyle. At the moment he was Lord Advocate. Carlyle had become so utterly despondent and was mentally so sick and dispirited as his heaven grew ever more threatening and bodeful of disaster that he looked about him almost in despair for any hodman's labour that suggested itself, if only it promised relief from a position which had grown intolerable. A small astronomical post was, it seems, vacant at the time, and for this Carlyle desperately appealed to Jeffrey. The appointment was far beneath Carlyle's attention really, a sort of assistantship involving the labour of a curator and the handling of the instruments. In more lucid moments Carlyle must have stormed at the straits to which he had been driven at this time.

To his anger and amazement he was treated in response to a lecture and a refusal in Jeffrey's worst manner. He was insulted for his treatment of his ailing wife! The letter conveys nothing but insult.

It is an unpardonable letter which was never forgiven or forgotten. What had Jeffrey to do with these matters, which lay solely between his wife and himself? Jeffrey went so far as to tell Carlyle flatly that he was not qualified for the post! A literal truth perhaps, but not very palatable and especially heartless coming from whom it did, from a man who knew Carlyle's desperate circumstances. One can hardly resist the conviction that Jeffrey took this devil's opportunity to pay off some old scores which had rankled.

But in the paltry business itself there can be no doubt Jeffrey was right. The mere truth is, Carlyle was far too good for the post and must have found it intolerable. The "secretary" who did to Carlyle's annoyance get the post constituted in reality a much better choice on Jeffrey's part, and had not Carlyle been blinded by his own miseries he must have been the first to say so. Carlyle was thinking solely of his sick and despondent wife and escape from Craigenputtock. He was now almost too beaten and broken to struggle longer. Anything was better than this ill-paid incessant literary drudgery which was slavery.

For after all his brilliant essays of solid gold and the promise revealed in *Schiller* and the translation work of Goethe, after *Sartor* even, the book of genius, Carlyle had reached such a pass, had so fallen in esteem to all appearance, as to be glad to strive to obtain an insignificant appointment which most certainly he would have despised and scorned fifteen years earlier! So miserable a bait has become tempting enough to lure him to total destruction, for acceptance implied nothing short of that. Nothing

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more convincingly establishes the proud man's desolation and despair. It is affecting evidence of the agony of the moment.

The end of it all so far as regards our further interest in Jeffrey was that unhappily but not inexcusably Carlyle never forgave the insult, and in his *Reminiscences* of the man was to overlook and even deny much real and timely help at Jeffrey's hands. Jeffrey was a friend far beneath Irving indeed in friendship and generosity, but Thomas Carlyle could never have lived by his pen had it not been for Jeffrey's kindly assistance and invaluable aid. Through Jeffrey and him alone could Carlyle reckon on a sufficiency of contributions being accepted. These were no longer rejected unread.

The series of essays and magazine contributions specifically recognisable as "German mysticism" comes practically to an end with Craigenputtock. They gave place for the most part to his greater work on the French Revolution which already was taking shape in his mind. The rest of the essays are mostly preliminary studies for the grand effort. All his married life so far, except for the unpublished *Sartor*, these miscellanies had occupied his energies, surely the most marvellous "pot-boilers" ever man wrote.

And at last *Sartor* also was to find an outlet, though at first that brought nothing but fresh trouble to the sorely tried Carlyle. James Fraser, the publisher, who had refused it as a book, was not unwilling to oblige the anxious Carlyle by venturing the doubtful material as a serial in the magazine which he edited. Carlyle over-persuaded him, he declared to his own undoing! Almost at once he was bitterly

regretting his indulgence, for to Carlyle's grief and unavailing anger he reported that subscribers to the magazine were threatening secession if "the undiluted moonshine of Teufelsdröckh" were not put a stop to. Readers, said Fraser, could not understand it. This was the last straw, the final indignity. Little wonder that at the time poor Carlyle was almost forced to the confession that his long and bitter struggle was like to end in . . . Failure.

But not even yet was the crisis at hand. Craigenputtock was to be memorable for more than high achievement and humiliation. Of one thing in the meantime Carlyle made very certain. If he did go down he would leave no debt behind him. He might go down a "zero" perhaps but not a minus quantity. On September 25, 1832, Carlyle recorded that he had repaid Jeffrey £103, 10s., being "his own whole debt" plus £43, 10s. from John of that brother's borrowing. Plainly he was now eager to be quit of all obligation to Jeffrey!

It was a gloomy time, and Carlyle's financial circumstances were never more depressed. But we must not fall into the error of misunderstanding the true extent of his poverty. He was paying off a debt which his creditor would fain have urged him to ignore. His pride yielded no whit of satisfaction to the enemy. Carlyle in poverty was far more haughty than Carlyle in prosperity. As we have stated more than once, the Carlyles were never really poor. Poverty drew steadily nearer as he grew older; that was all. It was bad enough, but they were never deprived of anything even distantly necessary. The riding horses were given up at this worst time of all,

but only for a little so far as Carlyle himself was concerned. Mrs. Carlyle in truth does not appear to have been at home in the saddle for all her gentle birth! Never at any time were they so poor that they had to abstain from holiday journeying. Mostly they took three or four of these in a year. Whatever else this may signify it annuls all claim to poverty. Many a man and woman would have recognised that they were fortunate indeed to have suffered the privations of the Carlyles at their worst. There has been far too much cheap pity for Mrs. Carlyle. There are degrees in everything. Failure not poverty was Carlyle's bugbear. Such a man, so industrious and gifted, must always have picked up a living somehow. All his hardships resulted from the height of the ambition which unconsciously drew him onward, on which his eyes were steadfastly set.

Each year of their existence in Craigenputtock and of bleak "exile" endured there was diversified by excursions from it, long absences in Edinburgh and London, or at Scotsbrig or Templand. Travelling expenses must have reached a goodly sum annually. One reads the most doleful letters implying the most cheerless and monotonous of existences only to find on the next page that Mrs. Carlyle or Mr. Carlyle are now away on holiday somewhere, he at his mother's or she at hers, but in any event both of them well out of "the desert" for a spell.

The rigours of a winter in Craigenputtock were for the most part successfully avoided in this way. Already one winter had been spent, as we have seen, in London. The following one, that of 1833, was spent in Edinburgh. The Carlyles left their retreat

in January and remained away till the end of March. "I have long been almost idle," he wrote his brother at this time, and the immediate object of the move to Edinburgh was to be near a well-filled library. *Sartor*, the work of genius, had been constructed out of his own consciousness and experience. So far its reception by the world had been a disappointment, a heart-breaking failure. Not that its author was ignorant of its value or was not proud of it. He believed in it against the world. Some day it must come into its own. But as yet the world had refused to look at it. What would it look at?

A likely subject had long been suggesting itself, one that had already occupied his thoughts more insistently since his visit to Paris where the scenes of the world drama had grown vivid to him. How these had haunted him! The French Revolution besides had played a most important part in the evolution of his own creed. History and particularly the story of the terrible Revolution in France which had transformed a world, which suggested nothing but blank atheism to John Henry Newman and eventually drove him into the Roman Church, proved for Thomas Carlyle the eternal watchfulness of God over the affairs of men. The French Revolution was a corner stone of the edifice of Carlyle's creed. God did not rule in Palestine long ago. He reigned in the world to-day. Therein lay the difference between Carlyle's creed and that of the Church as Carlyle conceived it.

In the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh he found material in plenty for the preliminary study of the Revolution. Almost the first result was the brilliant

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little sketch "Cagliostro," whose romantic career as a charlatan had fascinated Carlyle. The essay was written for *Fraser*, a magazine he was beginning to scoff at as the "mud magazine," most likely on account of the treatment to which poor *Sartor* had been subjected. Emerson, whom he was to meet shortly, recorded that Carlyle had names for all the magazines, nicknames of the true Carlylean cast. *Blackwood's* was the "sand magazine," while others were labelled as fitly. It was the hereditary trait in him cropping out.

"Edinburgh continues the dullest, poorest, and on the whole paltriest of places to me." Such was Carlyle's own characteristic contemporary comment on the present visit. All it means is that Carlyle is very depressed and out of sorts, writing or publishing little and making no headway. We must never forget Carlyle's bravery or that he was entirely dependent on what he could earn by his pen. Scott dare not have risked what Carlyle did. No wonder he was depressed. But as matter of fact Edinburgh had received the disdainful wanderers with as much welcome as they could expect. Perhaps the true cause of offence lay in the too loudly expressed sympathy that the world should continue so hostile to them. Carlyle is always declaiming against the world's want of sympathy, but woe betide any one who dares to express his pity. In actual life this cheap sort of sympathy comes to very little. The world has no antipathy to any. There can be no doubt the sufferings and complainings of his wife had increased his own evil tendencies to vituperation. Carlyle looked in vain for any influence from her to render



him more charitable and kindly to his fellow-men.

After their return to the moors a wonderful thing happened which must have brought a blink of sunshine into his dreary sky. While *Fraser's* readers, all but an unusually catholic Roman Catholic priest in Cork, were protesting volubly against the intrusion of the "rubbish" of *Sartor* in its pages the discriminating clergyman (whom Carlyle met later on) found an ally in strange places. This was a Unitarian minister of Concord in New England called Ralph Waldo Emerson, who also had detected in this intrusion the advent of genius. Emerson had read the wonderful essays and magazine contributions which had been appearing in various quarters above the modest name of "T. Carlyle," and they had stirred him exceedingly. Being an American he was no less curious than determined to see the author himself, and during this summer of 1833 he had actually crossed the Atlantic and visited London largely for that very purpose. There he inquired for Carlyle, and Mill, of whom luckily he made inquiry, was able to guide his steps to Craigenputtock. It is greatly to Mill's credit that he did guide Emerson thither, for many would have scoffed at the notion and led the inquirer to abandon his quest. Mill, however, honestly liked and admired Carlyle, and a warm even affectionate correspondence had existed between the two since the Carlyles' visit to the capital. To Craigenputtock accordingly the curious and enthusiastic Emerson came to begin a famous friendship which death alone terminated.

Emerson's name is always associated with Carlyle's in the public mind, but there is curiously little affinity

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between the two. As Froude pointed out, Emerson is ranked more highly in his native land than among ourselves, where his by no means contemptible originality appears dwarfed beside the very original author of *Sartor Resartus*. *Sartor*, however, is a book of the Ages, ranking alongside *Job* or *Faust*, a book the world does not receive the like of every century or every millennium.

"The Carlyles were sitting alone at dinner," says Froude, in his eloquent vivid way, "on a Sunday afternoon at the end of August 1833 when a Dumfries carriage drove to the door and there stepped out of it a young American then unknown to Fame but whose influence in his own country equals that of Carlyle in ours." This was Emerson. Although unknown here he had already something of an American reputation, and to such as understood him he revealed the promise of greatness. He was an intrepid thinker, an able critic, a suggestive lecturer and a preacher of remarkable essays. Mill had not been greatly impressed or he may have thought it necessary to make some sort of apology for the "liberty," but Carlyle was too flattered, as well he might be, by the mere fact that any man should take all that trouble to see and speak with him to fall into such a mistake. Fortunately he was ready it would appear to detect the uncommon character of his visitor.

From this strange meeting in the heart of the Scottish moors began a friendship supremely honourable to both and conspicuously generous on Emerson's part, more lasting and grateful than any other of Carlyle's intimacies. In after years many a cloud of misunderstanding arose, particularly when Carlyle

unthinkingly scoffed at the great Civil War in which Emerson's brother gave up his life, but nothing quenched it. The correspondence extended over their joint existence till the death of Emerson, the younger man of the two. It forms a long literary dialogue diversified by surprisingly little of Carlyle's best or most characteristic writing. Emerson was to be very helpful to Carlyle in the years to come, the herald of his Continental fame, and was sending to him in free generous gift remuneration from *Sartor* (the result of his own prudent arrangements) long before the unlucky Teufelsdröckh had received the honour of publication in book form in this country. Emerson provided the "American mouse" which Carlyle duly passed on to the "auld cat," his peasant mother in Ecclefechan.

Emerson himself has described their meeting in his *Representative Men*, and probably every one is familiar with the details. He asserts notably his own matchless insight by thus early singling Carlyle out as a representative man long before Carlyle's countrymen had done so. As yet, except for Goethe, he had been the first to treat him so. Carlyle might well be warmly grateful to Emerson.

The angelic visitor stayed overnight, and drove back the next day overjoyed by all he had heard and seen. "Carlyle was already turning his eyes towards London," he remarks, just as though Carlyle were a rustic thinking of London for the first time! One wonders whether Emerson knew that Carlyle had already been twice there and once in Paris. Significantly he tells us nothing about that other genius at Craigenputtock. Evidently like all other capable

observers he was too engrossed in the husband to trouble concerning the wife, the state of matters that wife was all her life silently rebelling against! Carlyle in a letter mentions what she thought of the visit, and it is what we might expect, not very witty or worth the preservation which has been accorded it. "Jane says 'it is the first journey since Noah's deluge undertaken to Craigenputtock for such a purpose.'" Perhaps "Jane" was a little bitter that it was a Carlyle not a Welsh made such a journey probable.

But Mrs. Carlyle was shrewd and was glad to note as Carlyle did a sign of coming fame. Though Fame is rarely mentioned at Craigenputtock her bright alluring face is never absent, only it must be such a Fame as will satisfy a Carlyle. For the Fame of the market-place Carlyle had nothing but contempt. In one of his youthful letters indeed he did cry Heaven to grant him "literary fame" as the one thing worth craving, but he had grown to his moral stature since then. His aim was not fame but to fulfil his destiny which implied it. Mrs. Carlyle had formed an inferior image of literary fame but had been guided into Carlyle's firm control. "I married for ambition." Both were well content in their different fashions with Emerson's visit. To Carlyle that visit was a welcome lightening of the sky, but he wrote simply that it had been "a cheerful day" and "we are thankful." One swallow does not make a summer, and it was not long ere Carlyle had gauged the true inwardness of the old saying.

No sooner was Emerson gone than Mrs. Carlyle is away at Templand, leaving Carlyle solitary in his loneliness. If she was "ailing," as Froude pity-

ingly records, she was fortunate in possessing a kind husband who extended to her all the alleviation he could command, even to his own personal discomfort. We have been taught too long that Carlyle was a "perfect beast." When investigated the circumstances of his life show far otherwise. Servants invariably found Carlyle as easy to satisfy and live with as his wife was hard and suspicious. The trait is not unusual among servants, but it amply disproves Mrs. Carlyle's graphic pictures to the contrary, Carlyle's excessive irritability in the matter of food and slumber and comfort which according to her transformed the house into a Bedlam.

In her absence Carlyle "dropped into verse" almost for the last time. Probably all of his verse which has been published had now been written. It always amazes the young reader to discover that Carlyle ever wrote verse at all, and certainly none of his verses betrays any skill of execution or has metrical charm. Yet hundreds of working hours had been devoted to attempts to attain a mastery of verse which obstinately refused to come. "So much the worse for . . . Verse" was ever Carlyle's way when that happened.

In his present desperate plight only Mill among his London friends seemed loyal. The rout had set in. The Able Editors were falling from him. "Too obstinately self-sufficient" was the verdict passed. Soon there would but be himself and God till which time no man comes into his own. Already ominous signs were apparent that the end was not far off. His proud heart alone sustained Carlyle. He perceived clearly that it was hopeless and even inex-

pedient to rely on magazines any longer. Carlyle had reached the period which must in turn be reached by every great writer. He was now thirty-eight years old, and he had published no book of his own save the *Life of Schiller*. The early and rapturous welcome of Edinburgh and the world in 1827 had died away. In 1834 Carlyle was no longer satisfying his readers. Jeffrey had been proved right and the British public had had enough of "German mysticism." There was too some real sense in the verdict. Carlyle would stand higher to-day had he followed rather the *Tristram Shandy* of his earliest admiration, but then Carlyle had not found what he wanted there. Perhaps Goethe had not then ranked so loftily in our estimate and understanding of him, but Goethe's colossal reputation would have taken care of itself. We feel that we have been deprived of much in our Carlyle which he might then have uttered. Dimly Carlyle recognised that himself in the end when his own work stood out in all its essential originality, but it was too late, his task was over. And it is ill work questioning the gifts of the gods.

Mrs. Carlyle was growing more and more impatient with her lot and afraid of the future. Carlyle himself had now had more than enough of the moors. As usual he blames the moors, but black Care rode behind him wherever he went. He blames every locality in succession, but the discordance lay with himself and the length of time necessary to fit him adequately for his high destiny. There was now, in short, every reason for him essaying his last venture and tempting London once more. No good could now be hoped for from longer residence at Craigen-

puttock with a despondent wife and clean out of all publishing opportunities. The die must be cast. Carlyle was now in search of a publisher again and London was the natural place at this stage of the proceedings. In London he was on the field of battle with his guns brought as near the enemy as was practicable. The time had come for the last hand-to-hand encounter with the publishers who held his Fate—under God.

Carlyle possessed a considerable reputation in London, where he was not altogether unknown, as we have seen. Such as best knew the man best realised his sagacity and knowledge and could correctly estimate his moral strength. The publishers, to do them credit, must have known very well that if Carlyle would write a book which should prove popular the book would sell and be a triumph. He had the genius if the public would buy, and the public must buy if Carlyle were to live by his pen. These were the dry bones of the business. *Sartor*, they would tell him or could have told, had been doomed from birth and was precisely the most outwardly unattractive work of genius that had ever appeared. Contrasted with its peers, with *Gargantua* and *Tristram* or the keen transparent mockery of the *Tale of a Tub*, *Sartor* suffers by comparison. These others had been abundantly popular. The fault if any lay with Carlyle, but naturally Carlyle failed to see it. He knew it was a book of genius and nothing else mattered, which would have been true had he been proposing to publish it at his own expense.

The French Revolution was now occupying his

sombre mind in Protean shapes. He had already published the *Cagliostro* and (tentatively) *The Diamond Necklace*. In its first form the publisher looked askance at the latter, but its earliest shape was not final. In any event, the tremendous Revolution itself, not only in such incidents of dramatic and breathless interest, but in masses of lurid colour and vivid portraiture, in all its mingled horror, madness, and grandeur, was dominating all the forces of his giant intellect. Carlyle scarce knew at first what to make of such a wealth of thought, but he knew he possessed material for a hundred books and was aware that his next, his last venture was already ordained for him. His final effort in the domain of literature must take the Revolution as its text. Only so could Carlyle (himself well knew) utter his message. He knew himself inspired.

Irresistibly forces within aided his wife and friends without in counselling departure for London. We who judge after the event and know that Carlyle's mind had already uttered his one original utterance drawn from the deeps of his own consciousness may reasonably infer that no second great book was likely to be drawn therefrom. As with most men of genius, Carlyle's first and greatest book is the record of his own experience. Often the writer who succeeds with this fails to go farther. If he is not exhausted he has no further inspiration. Perhaps in that case genius is wanting. Time alone can decide. Literary criticism in such cases is worse than folly. We are mostly too pitifully ignorant of our own possibilities to gauge those of another! Carlyle's venture had failed meantime. Rabelais, Swift, and Sterne did nothing after-



wards half so good. It was as well perhaps that Carlyle's first effort did fail to touch success, for he might then have become as bizarre and "prophetic" as Irving. It was in him to become so.

Carlyle knew now he must draw on something else than himself. He was very weary of his own consciousness, if the truth were told, and of solitude. His later life, like his visits to London already, proved that he had both a fondness and a weakness for more luxurious existence and the country mansions of the well-to-do, that he liked notice and admiration and was by no means a "solitary" save in moments of inspiration and work. How poorly equipped was Carlyle for life's tempestuous sea compared with Sir Walter Scott, at whom he almost sneered! What a hubbub and commotion he creates when he cannot write or is unwell or even when at work! What a very noisy and voluble gentleman, in short, is our preacher of the gospel of silence and endurance! Scott would appear in Abbotsford at breakfast among a houseful of visitors and not one of these knew or guessed that his host had been awake and at work since sunrise, had written a chapter or so of a novel and was yet as free from worry or care as the most frivolous among them. The different worldly circumstances of the two men of course explain much, but Scott's mind was as sunny and happy as Carlyle's was gloomy and sombre. Either was unfitted by nature for the work of the other. Both possessed minds of the highest cast, supremely great and comprehending.

Craigenputtock in truth had served its purpose, for *Sartor* could have been written nowhere else. There alone could Carlyle be so driven in on himself

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and so protected from the possibility of outside interference. It took him all his time to procure these in any shape or form, and had his wife had her will they must have been for ever out of reach. For seven years, permissive nevertheless of plenty holidaying and journeying, while his famous essays were being written Carlyle had been narrowed practically to the stores of his own mind and his own experience. *Sartor* is the grand result, *Sartor* and the magnificent essays "of solid gold," an imposing even an amazing result revealing the extraordinary richness of his intellect. Carlyle indeed was to do nothing greater, nothing better, nothing more potent for good. His skill and literary craftsmanship had not yet, however, reached their maximum, and Carlyle's most artistic and popular work was all to come. The artist in him was yet to rise to maturity and triumph. It was by his artistic excellence Carlyle was to capture the world.

In April 1834 Carlyle reached the decision which was now as inevitable as it was welcome and agreeable. He determined to essay London and to strive to find utterance there where books of reference might be found in abundance for this new message which was uppermost in the welter of his mind. Accustomed to the usages of Scotland and imagining that England possessed the same regulations for house-hiring, Carlyle saw reason for instant flight. Houses he supposed were let there at two terms only in the year, those of May and Martinmas as in Scotland, so that there was need of haste if he were not to find that all the best houses had been snapped up! Mrs. Carlyle could follow when Carlyle had prospected. He took upon

himself all the burden and worry of house-hunting, leaving alas! for her the equally unpleasant task of bringing up the household luggage. These were just the little "selfish" incidents which most annoyed that lady. But she was very very eager to be gone and recognised the inevitable.

Once again Carlyle took his departure from Craigenputtock for London, not despondent at the moment, hopeful rather in the main with a chastened hopefulness as of one hoping against hope. For the first time Carlyle left Scotland definitely like a Whittington with the sound of Bow Bells in his ears. London, Empire, the World, Fame, Power, Influence—all were calling him, and the dubious doubting Carlyle who had hesitated so long knew that to hesitate longer was to invite catastrophe. In reality, though he felt it not, Carlyle had far more to cheer and aid him than most of the men of letters who have listened to the same syren call. He was no stranger in London. As matter of fact he had written already the finest work of his time, though the world had remained largely indifferent to it because its eyes were not yet opened. The fact differentiates the case of Carlyle from the poor little Chattertons who end in tragedy. Bow Bells! London! Yes, but it is a very capable and experienced Whittington who listens, one who has already been tried in the furnace of affliction and one destined to succeed, who would prove to the world the consummate literary artist he had become. Least of all periods in his life had that in Craigenputtock passed in vain.

## CHAPTER XX

LONDON—THE CRISIS—VICTORY—MAY 1834 . . . 1837

CARLYLE came hurrying up to Ampton Street, his old lodgings. He soon discovered that he had been mistaken as to the English customs regulating house-letting. There was no such need for haste as he had fancied. He lost no time nevertheless, but straightway set out to survey a wide neighbourhood. He settled eventually on two houses in different quarters, either of which he thought was specially adapted to their requirements. And very wisely he left the final decision to his wife. As even Macaulay's schoolboy (who is not likely to have read Carlyle) knows, No. 5 Cheyne Row, Chelsea, was the residence which found most favour with both and was chosen. Renumbered now as "24," it was ultimately purchased and is now the property of Trustees acting for posterity, dedicated to the memory of its most distinguished occupant, a world's possession for ever. 5 Cheyne Row was the last home of the Carlyles.

In it Carlyle was to fight the last ditch, amazingly to conquer and thereafter to march onward and upward to successive victories. In its drawing-room his dead wife "suddenly snatched away from him" lay in state, in it he died, and at long last it witnessed the final handing over of house and title-deeds to the

Trustees in perpetuity. In a peculiar degree 5 Cheyne Row with its sound-proof room at the top, built in desperation by Carlyle as preventive of street noises, with its associations, tragedies, and comedies, is identified with the Carlyles whose lonely unsocial shades still appear to haunt the vacant rooms. Who has not sorrowed there with Carlyle? Who has not admired and loved Carlyle in these empty halls? Who has not looked awesomely at the little confined bedroom which was his, the room immediately beneath it which was hers, and the parlour wherein she sat busy with her needle while Carlyle crouched on the hearthrug and smoked up the chimney?

His wife followed him in a month or so. As the little party were passing in a cab through Piccadilly Circus *en route* for Chelsea, "Chicot," the canary, sang out pipingly and cheered Carlyle's heart as by an encouraging omen. Carlyle had made a very wise choice of residence. Even with its disadvantages for the present-day housewife the house is a rarity among London suburban houses, with rooms unusually large, almost spacious, convenient and near the City. In Carlyle's day Chelsea was possessed, however, of many features, rural and nautical, and of a quiet stately beauty which it has now forfeited through the race for gold. It was a historical spot greatly favoured by artists and literary men for obvious reasons. The rent of the house was only £35 a year, reckoned low even then. Carlyle was probably the shrewder bargainer of the famous pair when he condescended to it, but Mrs. Carlyle is always claiming a genius in that sort quite superior to his and Carlyle admiringly supports her. When one remembers Carlyle's

an old believer and a warm admirer, perhaps their most helpful friend at this period. But Leigh Hunt, another of Carlyle's older acquaintances, was a more frequent visitor, an amiable, perhaps lovable, but very trying and inconvenient neighbour. Hunt lived a few doors away in an adjoining street and was soon a familiar guest at the evening porridge, which seems to have been the staple and characteristic feature of the Carlyle supper, much wondered at and admired or at least spoken about among their English friends. Equally soon was poor Hunt imploring Carlyle's help in his distresses and Carlyle was lending a sympathetic ear, giving Hunt literally all he could afford in the straitened condition of his own finances. Carlyle's noble generosity is his most lovable trait. It was never absent in any period, least of all in the very crisis of his fortunes when things looked at their blackest. Let it be remembered to his credit. Hunt's own noble gratitude is thus expressed in his *Autobiography*: "I believe that what Mr. Carlyle loves better than his fault-finding, with all its eloquence, is the face of any human creature that looks suffering and loving and sincere; and I believe further that if the fellow-creature were suffering only and neither loving nor sincere, but had come to a pass of agony in this life which put him at the mercies of some good man for some last help and consolation towards his grave, even at the risk of loss to repute and a sure amount of pain and vexation, that man, if the groan reached him in its forlornness, would be Thomas Carlyle."

These eloquent words should plead for Carlyle for ever in every honest heart. They are the noblest

answer to his wife's complaints and to all complaints. Which of us shall earn such a tribute? No one ever wrote in that fashion of Jane Welsh.

Carlyle's unique conversational powers were bound to attract all genuinely intellectual people. Such gathered about the Carlyles in Cheyne Row, in greater numbers naturally as his fame extended. Even before the tide turned, while still Fate seemed to tremble in the balance, Mrs. Carlyle was far happier and more hopeful than she had ever been. She was in London. Loneliness was perhaps the worst of all the ills that suffering lady had to contend with. Lack of gaiety is candidly half her complaint. It looks very much as though Carlyle's one unforgivable fault in the eyes of his wife was his poverty. But had he been wealthy without being illustrious, she had been as little satisfied. The real fault lay within.

The married pair were familiar figures also among a certain section of the well-to-do and fashionable—the Bullers, Montagus, and so on. Poor Irving was painfully panting to the finish, like a hunted animal whose one desire is to die unseen. Perhaps his worst agonies were inflicted by the faithful, who had accepted the new doctrine and amazingly believed. How they must have jarred on the nobility of the man! Between Irving and the Carlyles there was now neither coming nor going. At the last Irving made a formal call which proved farewell. It was then he uttered that final flash of Irving gallantry to Mrs. Carlyle: "You are a charming little Eve, and make a Paradise wherever you go." One does not wonder that Irving had fascinated her in the long

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ago, and perhaps in that moment the memory of him crept back to the warmest corner of her heart. "There would have been no 'tongues' had I married Irving." She was right. Yet in that case neither could Irving and she have been happy in spite of her supposed amiability, for she confessed also, "I married for ambition." She would have sighed for Carlyle!

In any event, she dreaded her weird. In another month Irving lay dead and Carlyle was writing his sincere and affectionate tribute to his memory. It was Irving's merest due, the well-earned right of him who had been Carlyle's first and most believing friend. Even in the *Reminiscences*, where loyalty to Her and loving magnification of Her so frequently jar, Carlyle is almost uniformly kind, grateful, and sympathetic to Irving, his dead friend to whom he owed so much that could never be repaid. He never utters a word that might injure, and he supplies corrective antidote there to much that may have been hastily written in contemporary letters. Carlyle too comes honourably out of that memorable friendship.

While friends were gathering round the newcomers Carlyle stood to his work and was incessant in industry. In the beginning, ere yet his fame had been established—nay, even while his fate hung in the balance—it would be a mistake to conceive him as the impatient scorner of interrupting acquaintances and visitors he afterwards became. He was neither so foolish nor impolite as the world fancies. He was wide awake to all the issues involved, for no one better realised all that was at stake. Jeffrey and his wife might think him obstinate, but himself knew he travelled the one and only road within his ken, the



high road to supreme fame or nihil. So clearly did he recognise this truth that the hundred avenues these others saw open to a genius such as his had no existence for him. There *is* but the one Way—the way Goethe had travelled before him, the one every great man must travel to reach his destiny. It is the irony of the great that the path is hidden from every one but themselves. Carlyle knew the path and no more faltered in London than in Craigenputtock. He left no stone unturned. He went about his business among publishers, he took every precaution, he neglected nothing. He had the infinite capacity for taking pains which is not genius and is never mistaken for it. His wife was no ordinary helper, and she aided greatly by her wise encouragement. She too was literary, and Carlyle even exaggerated the value of her opinion, with the best results for himself. By this time none knew better than she just wherein her influence lay and how it affected him, and she was quick to tell now wherein no earthly power could modify him. Their worldly circumstances, though without stability yet and sometimes doubtful beyond words, were highly agreeable to both. The Carlyles moved in enviable society, for instinctively Carlyle always attached himself to what was really the best society available. He went to no houses but those of people well worth knowing, whom it was a privilege to know. No sneer is intended but a fact is recorded. Like naturally draws to like.

Up till now, in spite of his unpromising outlook, Carlyle had enjoyed a life of remarkable variety and interest. No man so unfavourably circumstanced at

birth ever enjoyed better fortune. He had travelled as perhaps hardly another of his class and time had done, as his wife had never done in spite of the great prospects she alleged were hers. Had Carlyle been one-half as grateful to God as he ought to have been, he would better have realised the wholesome truth. Had he possessed a less exalted notion of his own magnificent intellect and literary power, he had expressed more gratitude for actual timely help and advancement to both Jeffrey and Irving. The gift of Irving indeed was a veritable fairy gift, second only to his initial endowment at birth, the richest blessing Carlyle ever received.

So while Carlyle is labouring, hard pressed and sick with anxiety, with a resigned, dulled obstinacy and the determination of him who fights with his back to the wall, he was no mere passive waiter on Providence. "God helps those who help themselves" is a national proverb Scotsmen soon learn the truth and applicability of. Carlyle was a shrewd tactician—which is to say that simple sincerity is the best tactics of all. Carlyle was too deeply in earnest to mislead himself or any other. He was mindful of their everyday household wants while the great book was being cogitated, and he found editors to carry him over the intervening space till the great issue should be decided.

As we have said, Mill, if not the most frequent visitor at Cheyne Row, was easily Carlyle's closest and most ardent friend at this period. As yet Mill waited for Carlyle's genius to unfold and was full of belief and expectation. He was very ready to overlook Carlyle's latent hostility to many of the

articles of faith he most devoutly cherished, the radical and utilitarian doctrines himself professed, which he was to learn later were held in peculiar abhorrence by Carlyle as both superficial and valueless. Mill was delighted with what of Carlyle's work on the French Revolution he had seen. He was impressed by the insight and earnestness of the artist. And so it came about that Mill asked and obtained Carlyle's permission to carry off the first volume of the new book, which Carlyle had just brought to a finish.

On the 6th of March 1835 he returned to tell of a terrible catastrophe. The accident is almost too well known to bear repetition, but it is important, not only for its effect on Carlyle's prospects but as a notable instance of his kind-heartedness under cruel torment, his high courage, endurance, and nobility of soul.

Mill visited the Carlyles that March evening looking so white and perturbed, so ghastly, in fact, as to create a sensation on his arrival. "What ails ye, Mill?" gasped out Carlyle, apprehensive of some domestic calamity, it would seem, of which he imagined Mill had been sent to break the news. Mill told his simple, terrible tale. He had left out the manuscript on his desk at home, and the servant girl had used it to light the morning fire with! The tragedy was complete. Nothing was left.

It was a stunning blow, for Carlyle destroyed his notes and scribble sheets as he advanced. The volume had been completed, and the side papers likely to help had been burned. His memory in normal circumstances might have recalled a great

deal, but Carlyle was to discover that it was a blank. It failed him at the critical moment, the result, doubtless, of the worry and excitement the poor man was undergoing. He could not recall the arrangement of the lost volume, and eventually was compelled to write a new one, not so good in his opinion as the burnt one. Doubtless the sorrowful labour of the second effort darkened the thought of it in its author's mind, for the inspired message, like the facts he described, remained the same. The freshness of the first glorious outflow was gone, but there may even have been a gain in solemnity. He was almost half-way through the unfolding of his thought when the accident happened and he had to retrace his steps.

Mill was aware of the narrowness of Carlyle's financial circumstances, and at once begged Carlyle to accept pecuniary compensation. He felt that his carelessness had been the sole cause of Carlyle's suffering. "Who can pay an author?" Carlyle had asked scornfully in his journal. "An author is not to be paid; you cannot put a money value on what a man writes." With Carlyle all work was inspired work, and money had nothing to do with it. He was loth to allow Mill to compensate him in any way. Had he not been positively at the end of his resources, one has little doubt he would have refused to accept a farthing. But such a course was now clean out of the question. Six months' labour had been lost and must be replaced when he could not afford to lose a day. Besides, when Carlyle came to consider, it was a cruel wrong to Mill to accept nothing, and Mill felt his position acutely. To alleviate Mill's distress Carlyle at last, under protest

as it were, accepted one hundred pounds, which it is pitifully evident was just the cost of the household expenses for the lost period. Mill honourably stood out for two hundred, but Carlyle would take no more.

Mill must have found a nobler satisfaction in doing his utmost in Carlyle's interests and in advancing in particular the new venture in which Fate had involved him so strangely. He had great influence among publishers, editors, and reviewers, and the benefit to Carlyle from Mill's efforts to make up for the disaster must have been considerable. Next to the intrinsic value and rarity of such a book as the *French Revolution*, Mill's aid and advocacy helped most largely to its swift and triumphant success. For in the end the book was a triumph which Dickens "read nine times," which indeed so impressed Dickens that we probably owe the *Tale of Two Cities* to "Mr. Carlyle's philosophy" there unfolded. Carlyle was thus in the end a gainer rather than a loser by the catastrophe, for Mill was much affected and grateful, but the extra labour and the load of anxiety it brought in its train made the initial cost a heavy one which Carlyle had to pay. It brought him to the very verge of collapse of a complete nature. It was almost the last straw.

Till the book was ready Carlyle toiled heavily and with pain as he always did, but the rewriting told most severely. He was an excessively industrious reader, wisely determined to read all he could on the subject in hand, and restlessly disposed to test the credibility of evidence. His preparation was elaborate, after which his mind treated all it had

imbibed in its own miraculous fashion, his vivid observation, his inherited talent for word description, his genius came into play, and Carlyle wrote diligently and incessantly till in his own words "he had got his message delivered." Such was Carlyle "in being."

The strain was tremendous, and now, when he was so despondent, failure seemed to flare out lurid before his hunted eyes. The tension was almost intolerable. His faith was at zero. Not faith in himself—that he never lost—but in the possibility of success—in reality, faith in God. The catastrophe did not break his courage but it almost extinguished hope. With desperate haste he returned to the charge again and again.

Fortunately, Mrs. Carlyle was in brighter mood, her real concern awakened. She was sorry for him, and nobly she forgot her own lesser griefs in his. She knew as well as he that the deciding struggle had been entered on. She had less doubt of the result. Better than Carlyle could she see the height at which he stood above his fellows, while Mill and others were at hand to justify her expectancy. Always in crisis Mrs. Carlyle rose to the occasion. We must not forget that never once did she fail him in his real moments of trial. At such times she kept her doubts to herself if she had any, and had nothing but encouragement for Carlyle. By letting him see that his fate was hers and *she* was not afraid, she nerved him for the battle. She knew too, and Mill could advise her, that the chances of success of a book on the French Revolution were infinitely greater than those of a *Sartor*. The lofty view

disqualified Carlyle from estimating the "saleability" of literature. Mrs. Carlyle helped her husband, now as always, "as none else could." Her epitaph is both truthful and just, as might have been expected of Carlyle. No failure in duty can be laid to her charge. Carlyle must have been the sorer put to it without her bright presence, her belief in himself, and her encouragement. Well might he grant her the epitaph.

The mischief did not lie among the larger virtues, of which she had abundance. Her overweening family pride and her characteristic lack of reticence were the "little failings" which wrought such fierce havoc with their reputations. For when the cloud descended it came in consequence of her tittle-tattle, her conversations and correspondence, her own misapprehensions, and her misreading and ignorance of the nobility of her husband's character. The lady had fascinated Froude, who hearkened so greedily as the spoilt child recalled her father's unthinking folly and the mythical family grandeur that he fancied she was in sober truth the daughter of baronial halls, and conceived the natural but erroneous notion that she had been dragged down to poverty and ill-health through a brave and loving but very foolish "ambitious" marriage with a mason's son!

"Alas! when we think that" Carlyle "now sleeps where bitter indignation can no longer lacerate his heart," and that his wife "now sleeps by his side, where the breastwork of gentility is quite thrown down—who would not sigh over the thin delusions and foolish toys that divide heart from heart and

make man unmerciful to his brother?" How seldom do we reck our own rede!

On 23rd September 1835 Carlyle writes to his brother John: "By the real blessing and favour of Heaven I got done with that unutterable manuscript on Monday last and have wrapped it up, there to lie till the other two volumes be complete. . . . The rest of the book shall go on like child's play." He had been rewriting the first volume, and after six months' hard labour is where he had been in March! It was cruel work, but victory is at hand. Far from his sight, however, and very distant at that moment, for Carlyle is physically and mentally so exhausted he must take refuge in instant flight. In spite of his eagerness and his intense anxiety, the body refused to be whipped further. He was really in a far worse and indeed more dangerous state than he fancied. He swiftly made up his mind to recruit in Scotland, to fly homeward to his old mother, in whose loving sympathy he always found deliverance from the hags of despair. To obtain a whiff of the fresh sea air, Carlyle went north by steamer to Newcastle, whence across the Cheviots he found his way to Scotsbrig. Not an instant too soon. His case was critical. Fear dogged him. When he reached his destination and was once again among "his own mountains," their familiar shapes appeared menacing to his blurred sight. The eternal hills terrified. The devil seemed agrin over his coming discomfiture. He was hovering on the confines of reason. Rest was imperative and rest he found. The presence of his mother and her ministrations soon revived him. His old mother never failed him, but Carlyle was oddly



ignorant that his wife might infer from the fact her own insufficiency. The younger woman was silent but resentful. Again and again was Carlyle to return to his peasant home in such moments of weariness and overwork, and he always drew reinvigoration from his visit. But never again did he so skirt the edge of utter discomfiture. Never again had he such an experience as this.

Mrs. Carlyle, however, was not left behind like a discarded wife to wait her lord's return in Cheyne Row, the aspect in which, unfortunately, she too frequently saw herself or imagined herself. Carlyle was not merely careful of himself, as she so often said and hinted. He may have relied—as why should he not?—on her speaking out her grievances if she had any, and he may have jumped too swiftly to the conclusion that she had none, but he was not negligent or careless of her comfort. Mrs. Carlyle was not left in Cheyne Row. Instead, she availed herself of the kind invitation some new friends of her husband's had offered her, and spent the time during which Carlyle was recruiting with the Sterlings, in the home of no less a personage than the Editor of the *Times*. One may safely call him *the* Editor, because it was from an editorial written by Edward Sterling the epithet "Thunderer" was taken which came to be applied to the newspaper itself. Sterling was the "Thunderer." "We thundered yesterday," Edward is said to have written, striking the stars with his sublime head.

As we have said, the Carlyles were never without influential friends. It must always be of help to a man in the crisis of his fate that he is possessed of

friends like the Editor of the *Times*. Carlyle had found this one through the hero-worship, as it might be called, of Sterling's son for himself. The Rev. John Sterling, concerning whose real character Carlyle was to speak so nobly, whose Life he was to write in magnificent requital for Sterling's loyal and discerning belief in himself, had been rather adrift in the world of thought at the time he encountered Carlyle and had virtually annexed himself to the latter both as disciple and affectionate friend. Sterling the younger had naturally introduced Carlyle to his father, and an intimacy had sprung up between the houses of which this invitation was one result. It was peculiarly grateful to Mrs. Carlyle, between whom and John Sterling was the link of kindred literary tastes of the "delicate-handed priest" order. Another result of the friendship was an offer which Carlyle received and declined at this time to become a leader-writer for the *Times*. The fact serves to remind us that we must observe proportion in dealing with Carlyle's outlook at this moment of trial. Carlyle was not unsupported and he had no lack of friends able and glad to be of use. But for the same reason which made Carlyle decline the chance of serving the *Times*, these were of no real service to him and, willing as they were, could lend no aid. Had Carlyle been able to accept their help, that would have been an end of the matter. What Carlyle fought for now was his Freedom, the freedom which no man possesses who owns as his master either an "employer" or the "policy of the paper," a sect, profession, or a Church. Carlyle aimed at the heights and could be content with no lower altitude.

There is little use in speculating as to what Carlyle must have done had the *French Revolution* proved a failure, for it did not prove a failure. Most probably he would have found his way to America, which country, under the wise guidance of Emerson, regarded Carlyle at the moment as the great man his own land persistently refused to consider him. Emerson had already begged of him to cross the Atlantic, and there would have been nothing left against the suggestion had Carlyle failed. It is like speculating on what would happen were there no God. Carlyle could not have failed. With regard to Carlyle's own feelings at the time, however, it is not unimportant to remember that the possession of friends such as his must have helped greatly to sustain self-confidence. Their belief reacted on Carlyle in the most helpful way. He forgot his debt to them in after years, yet it was not slight.

In four short weeks Carlyle was back and took up his work again with renewed energy. No writer ever wrote more vehemently than Carlyle or forced himself more unmercifully to the task. His books, as he himself remarked, are written in his heart's blood. He meant every word he wrote. There was never any padding in his work. Homer nods, but in Homeric fashion. *Sartor*, Carlyle's most inspired work, seems to have cost him least effort, as one might expect. It was the labour and drudgery of preparation, one suspects, rather than the strength of the inspiration itself which so seriously weakened him. It is, of course, the common experience that no labour is so exacting as high literary labour, but Carlyle suffered more almost than any

other recorded man. At such times the mind of the man seems at a white pitch of intensity, Carlyle's characteristic earnestness. Latterly, when the fight was won, he showed less and less desire to engage on another task, but soon the other task calls him, and once undertaken, it gives Carlyle no peace till it is finished. There is reason to believe that had Carlyle been independent he would not have been a writer of books. The man was sincere when he deprecated the speaker, the talker. It was characteristic of him all the same that in his heart he knew the truth, that no "doer" can compare with the writer of an inspired book. Like most others, Carlyle might well rejoice that Providence overruled many natural inclinations. As himself observed, "Shift a pebble; you have altered the centre of gravity of the Universe." It was a greater truth than perhaps even Carlyle recognised, with a wider signification.

The "making of Carlyle," the preparation of every great man for the task God allots him, is carried on in silence. It is when a Government comes into conflict with and imprisons the silent (not the noisy) men that a Revolution or change is at hand.

His was to be a hard life of patient industry to the end, but not a sad one and very far from a discontented. Nay, it was to be more fortunate by far than the average, an existence full of blessings dignified and stately to the close. The storm of obloquy but swept his grave; it had not risen to darken his earthly existence. It was to pass and has passed. For so small a yearly income as Carlyle

found sufficient and more than sufficient, for the meagre pecuniary wages accorded his incomparable life-work no man enjoyed more of the advantages and benefits brought by wealth and high social rank. These were at his service when the fight had been won. Carlyle stood above all that. He could have gone anywhere in London or world society, and latterly he was invited everywhere, a marked distinction to every assembly. In these years when the Bullers, Stracheys, and Montagus were falling out (Mrs. Carlyle perhaps took good care of that!) the Sterlings and others were coming forward. The higher a man ascends the more certain and agreeable the homage, if the man be truly great. Carlyle found it so. After Fame had come to him, a few years later than the period of which we are now speaking, friends richer and more important in influence and more elevated in station than ever flocked round Carlyle. Lord Ashburton, Lord Houghton, and Erskine of Linlathen merely headed a notable list of admirers who put up with all his humours, which were neither few nor easily dealt with, noted his whims, and were reverentially glad to be of service. The world was very kindly to Carlyle in the end, but Carlyle had long conquered the world and its earlier hostility warned him of the value of the world's opinion. There was no chance of Carlyle, or any man who had endured as Carlyle had, losing his head. Carlyle held himself aloof, relaxing no whit of his independence and affording the world an example the "self-made" man can never hope to be able to give and the "God-made" man cannot fail to instil. Being Carlyle, however, he was

scornful besides. But he was far more ready and willing than some suppose to accept the benefits his fame brought him. Carlyle was neither so morose nor so unyielding as he has been depicted. Rather was he very sensible of real kindness and grateful to any man of high station who honoured him and was himself worthy of respect. Carlyle keenly enjoyed being able to command a good holiday in a grand house with the finest company his country could produce. He was honest and remained natural.

Carlyle toiled at the *Revolution* all through the years 1835 and 1836 into 1837, and the length of time found necessary is eloquent testimony to the care and thoroughness of the workmanship. For no one ever put harder work into the time than Carlyle. For the rest, he went about enjoying the best society and particularly the warm friendship of his latest disciple, the Reverend John Sterling, who had found a sincerity in Carlyle he had looked for in vain in the Church of England. "Towards me and still more true towards England no man has been and done like you," were the farewell words Sterling wrote to Carlyle. Death was swift to claim that eager young enthusiast. Carlyle nobly repaid Sterling's belief in him, which had so effectively encouraged himself at the critical moment, by the splendid fashion in which he embalmed Sterling's memory in his *Life* of him. Providence was kind indeed to Carlyle to grant him friends like John Sterling when the fight raged most furiously and his strength was most tried. Men like Sterling, gifted with the far insight often revealed to those

on whom Death has already set his seal, who themselves are turning towards the real and spiritual, are the certain heralds of the dawn and the coming Powers. Sterling thus early recognised Carlyle's true greatness, the gift which in him was sent the English race. And Carlyle drew incalculable spiritual strength from the confiding belief of a soul so loyal. Always the deep answers the deep.

Let the eloquent Froude carry on Carlyle's story. "The last sentence (of the *French Revolution*) was written on the 12th of January 1837, on a damp evening just as the light was falling. Carlyle gave the MS. to his wife to read and went out to walk. Before leaving the house he said to her, 'I know not whether this book is worth anything, nor what the world will do with it, or misdo or entirely forbear to do, as is likeliest; but this is what I could tell the world; "You have not had for a hundred years any book that comes more direct and flamingly from the heart of a living man. Do what you like with it, you —"'"

But the world is neither so stupid nor malevolent as Carlyle supposed in the extremity of his depression when he was exhausted, "done." Thirty years after, Carlyle, as Lord Rector chosen by the students of his old University of Edinburgh, was to inform them, for their guidance and the fruit of his own experience, from the heart, that the world entertains no hatred towards any man as so many a bright soul (and himself) had supposed, but was at worst indifferent to them. Good, honest, capable work makes headway sooner or later, inevitably. There *is* a God and the intrinsic value of every man will have been realised

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when his life is complete. What Carlyle was bodeful of now was that long intervals of time, even death, may elapse between promise and fulfilment. Appreciation of the literary work of genius may be long delayed. There is plenty opportunity for the mocker and the scoffer. His faith was in fact at the lowest ebb. The crisis was actually safely over, but the effects were not yet visible. With such an experience as his what wonder Carlyle's voice was ever insistently raised against that subtle temptation, the adoption of literature as a profession? Carlyle was now forty-two years of age and had been tried in the furnace as few have been, yet not as he was disposed to think too painfully and with many advantages and friends, by no means very uncomfortably when one remembers the distance travelled, and far more happily than Burns for example. The purest of gold remained, but the iron had entered also. Carlyle never recovered from the ill-treatment (as he conceived it) and he never forgave it. Only such a creed as *Sartor* reveals could have nerved a man for such a trial of endurance as Carlyle regarded it.

What he really hungered for, in plain words, and what was necessary for any man dependent on his pen for his livelihood, was public appreciation. He had obtained that in degree only, not with *Sartor* and not as he knew he could and must obtain it. Such appreciation was necessary as would make him independent and his own master, such as would tempt publishers to print whatever he chose to write. His was the message. Carlyle must be master.

The one problem left for Carlyle to solve during



the months which were to intervene between the completion of the task and the appearance of the reviews was how to fill the exchequer till some return might be looked for from the book itself. A year or two must necessarily elapse between now and then. We are indebted, it would seem, to Miss Martineau, whose acquaintance Carlyle made about this time, herself an able lecturer, for the suggestion which found favour with him and indeed revealed new powers in him, that Carlyle should deliver lectures on literature to the London public.

There were two series of lectures, delivered in successive years, and both were financially successful, though the second series, that on "Hero-Worship," has completely eclipsed the earlier on "German mysticism." At first the lecturer relied on reading what he had written, then he fell back on notes, but finally in despair resorted to the inspiration of the moment and discovered that the power of the orator was his also if he cared to develop it. His delivery, timid to begin with, soon drew fire and energy as he went on, until at last he seems to have forgotten his audience and held it spellbound.

It is notable that he ventured once more on German literature for the first series. He realised his mistake apparently, or perhaps Jeffrey's wise advice came back to him, that the British public would stand no more "German mysticism," for he never republished the first series, though that has been done by others in late years. At all events Carlyle could not fail to perceive the different enthusiasm which was accorded the lectures on "Heroes," nay the superiority of the subject matter

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which this time was inspired. In the second series he was delivering his own message, not criticising or explaining the inspiration of others. Carlyle was himself too great a man for work of the critical kind, and might with advantage have discovered the fact earlier had he listened to Jeffrey. Carlyle's literary labours must have ranked higher among us had he done so, for it is in the message of Carlyle himself Carlyle's countrymen are most interested.

The success of the first series, however, saved the financial situation in Carlyle's home. Mrs. Carlyle was temporarily overcome by the strain but soon recovered. Some one hundred and thirty pounds, "sufficient to tide us over another year," was the direct and important result of the gallant effort. Before the second series was due the tide had fully turned and success had come. The *French Revolution* had been published and acclaimed by the world. Carlyle was a famous man. The reaction was terrible and again Carlyle had to fly to Scotsbrig, but this time in how different a mood! He read the reviews amid the restful peace of his mother's home.

The *French Revolution* made all the difference. When Carlyle lectured on "Heroes and Hero-Worship" and discoursed so eloquently concerning the great dead, he was a man of mark, talked about, famous. The first series may have stirred curiosity concerning the man "with the Annandale accent" who so touched the very heart-fibres of his audience, but his listeners cared little for his subject. Now, his genius was recognised and his message struck home. Carlyle enjoyed the full sweets of triumph the more

keenly for the dangers passed. The long and dubious contest was over. Victory!

The "Making" of Carlyle was complete. The *French Revolution* proved him an artist of unusual powers, a prophet with a message, the most brilliant literary craftsman of the day. The book indeed possesses a unique charm which is irresistible. So grand and sublime is the central motive, to prove the ever-watchful government of God in human history, that Carlyle's masterpiece possesses the grandeur, the awe, the divine inspiration of an Isaiah or the Scriptures. One must go back so far to find a parallel. The motive indeed is the same and the creed is the same, only in the modern Scriptures the Gentile not the Jew is the Chosen People amid whom God is making Himself manifest.

Carlyle had succeeded and his success gives room for thought. The fate which had befallen *Sartor* is sufficient evidence that genius or power of thought alone could not save him or any man who is dependent on his pen, which means in the ultimate on popular taste. People who can revel in the abundant beauties of that book are not too plentiful. To the very last Carlyle was to receive nothing like the financial remuneration accorded the successful novelist. There is no necessary connection whatever between work or merit and pecuniary remuneration. But that was by his own choice. All the money that Carlyle demanded of the world was a sufficiency for himself and wife to live upon while he continued his work. Therein consisted the greatness of Carlyle. He was an inspired worker whose inspiration lay in the work itself and not in any consequence of it.

Had he chosen he might have earned as much money as Scott himself and far lesser men than Scott, but he must have ceased to be Carlyle. It was because of his circumstances he was compelled to look for money at all in connection with or as remuneration for literary labour. What Carlyle demanded as his right and due was far beyond what could ever be expressed by money value. Our age is far too ready to content itself with this last, often needful but always smallest consequence of human work.

Carlyle succeeded, but his success was not attained until his literary expression had captured the ear of his generation. Not by the greatness of his thought or work had he reached success, but because these had assumed a form that was instantly and generally recognised by everybody as a literary triumph. Unless a literary worker's labour be sympathetic in this way to the time in which it makes its appearance it cannot be expected to be successful. It is for Time alone to decide what value *French Revolution* and "latest novel" are to retain and to separate the temporal from the eternal.

*Sartor* had proved that in Carlyle lay the most original thinking force in literary Britain. Just as Rabelais seizes and embalms for all time in literature that amazing period preliminary to the Reformation, the condition of a world under an unreformed and unbelieving Church; just as Swift threw his eagle glance and flashed his keenest searchlights on all the Churches lashing them with his most cutting irony yet preserving reverence towards religion and God; just as Sterne reveals for the warning of posterity in *Tristram Shandy* the superficiality and

sentimentality of his astonishing Age and mind, so Carlyle gathers up all the phases of that national unrest and fever, the political and religious fervour which culminated in and in great part circled round the "Reform Bill" of 1832. That period indeed is now chiefly notable for this marvellous literary expression of it as the greatest and most religious mind of his age uttered it in *Sartor Resartus*.

The greater number of the critics of that work, however, appear to divorce it completely both from its author, the record of whose individual experience is its sole theme, and from the period of its birth. Carlyle himself is responsible for much of this; for he never adequately recognised that the Hero is to the fullest extent and in the most literal fashion the child of his Age besides being something higher than that, and that he is permeated through and through by the sentiments and thoughts common to all the thinkers the Age possesses. In the Hero these are merely wrought up to a white pitch of intensity. They are not peculiar to himself, nor can they fail to be uttered. Hero-Worship as interpreted by Carlyle overlooked or denied this, for the reason probably that Carlyle could not read the lessons and teaching of his own Hero life.

It will be apparent, however, to the reader that in Carlyle we find expressed in new terms nothing else than the Scottish Calvinistic creed of his mother. When properly examined Carlyle's creed is too stern a creed for the facts of his life when these in turn are fully considered, even as hers was regarded by himself. Carlyle passes the whole world of thought through his marvellous mind and the great religious,

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epoch-making character of his intellect becomes apparent. Nevertheless Carlyle could never have succeeded as a literary man had he not been able to write a "popular" book. How he must have scoffed at the notion! That was the fact, however, he dimly perceived when he advised his young inquirers "to keep out of literature." For literature is but one way of expressing thought. There are many others. Unless the literary aspirant do possess in reality and not only in his own opinion the requisite literary skill and excellence under the sole test of popularity or the number of copies sold he cannot hope to live by his pen. No writer can be original or a reformer except at the risk of starvation. The issue is in the hands of God alone, for the Hero reaches Fame at the moment his voice becomes the voice of his Age and no sooner. He must be able to endure and to hold fast to the faith within him through the long darkness which is so enervating, till all is ready for his reception. There is in short One other, God. Alone the Hero is powerless. The time must fit the man no less exactly than the man fits the time. Not even Carlyle could have succeeded had not his success been written in the Ages before him. As the materialist would put it, unbefriended by circumstances without, Carlyle must have failed.

To the "Making" of Carlyle went not only the old Scots Calvinism and all hereditary traits, not only his genius as half consciously and unconsciously he poured material into the mould of his mind and gave it forth again restated in his own fashion, but also the faithful and generous friendship of men and

women as noble, affectionate, influential, capable of helping and willing to aid as any friends man ever possessed from the beginning of time. For the Hero is not omnipotent. Much more is he the Child of his Age and the creation of his circumstances. He is himself under God.

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